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NATIONAL REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 1, 2008 VOL. LX, NO. 16

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■ ON THE COVER

Senator Stealth

Page 32

The same radical, separatist, anti-American theology of liberation that was so boldly and bitterly proclaimed by Obama's pastor is shared, if more quietly, by Obama's colleagues at the Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation, an influential national umbrella group for church-based "community organizers" that specializes in ideological stealth. *By Stanley Kurtz*

ARTICLES

18 **Wicca Economics** *by John Hood*
The theory with a magic leader.

22 **Dr. Obama's Prescription** *by James Capretta*
It isn't one we should want to take.

24 **Life Opportunities** *by Ramesh Ponnuru*
Why McCain shouldn't run away from the abortion issue.

26 **Quota Quest** *by John J. Miller*
Of Obama's vulnerability on racial preferences.

28 **Meandering toward Disaster** *by Andrew C. McCarthy*
The perils of making a left-wing ideologue commander-in-chief.

30 **Not Ready for Prime Time** *by Rob Long*
When you act too cool to be president . . .

32 **Senator Stealth** *by Stanley Kurtz*
How to advance radical causes when no one's looking.

37 **Who Is Barack Obama?** *by Michael Gledhill*
His autobiography paints a disturbing picture.

41 **Soldier for Stroger** *by David Freddoso*
The candidate of change helped keep Chicago politics dirty.

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

47 **Hero of a Dark Century**—Daniel J. Mahoney tours the literary works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

50 **Staying Power**—*Victor Davis Hanson . . .*
Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy, *by Natan Sharansky with Shira Wolosky Weiss*

52 **Scenes of Intimacy**—*Michael Knox Beran . . .*
The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage, *by Daniel Mark Epstein*

53 **Film: Tales of Waugh**—Ross Douthat reviews *Brideshead Revisited*.

54 **The Straggler: On the Shelf**—John Derbyshire reveals his love affair with libraries.

SECTIONS

2 Letters
4 The Week
44 The Long View
46 Help!
49 Poetry
56 But Enough about You

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letters to the editor

SO YOU'RE SELLING MY BABY

In his article "Lost Generation" (August 4) Kevin D. Williamson illustrates another tragic result of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision and its concomitant 50 million abortions: a trend toward fewer children available for adoption in the United States.

Yet in commenting on the apparent disconnect between millions of white Americans seeking to adopt while 500,000 children, most of them minorities, "languish" in foster care, he takes too great a leap in embracing the actual *sale* of parental rights.

Williamson claims that the system is stacked against potential adoptive parents, citing a survey that found antipathy to transracial adoptions on the part of caseworkers in New York. But the "tilt" against transracial placements, as perceived by Williamson, can be explained instead by the realities of foster care.

Here at Little Flower Children & Family Services, more than 30 percent of all foster-care placements are in "kinship" homes—that is, with a child's family member. These adoptions are thus not likely to be "transracial." If no family members are available, the policy of Little Flower is to try to place foster children in their home communities, providing continuity and greater likelihood for a successful placement. In practice, this means that a black child placed in a non-kinship foster home will often continue to live in a neighborhood that is significantly black.

Despite the "adoption bureaucracy" cited by Williamson, Little Flower has won repeated "outstanding" ratings from New York City's Administration for Children's Services, achieving 227 adoptions from foster care in 2006 and 2007. We charged no one a fee. The City of New York's census of foster children has shrunk from over 46,000 in the 1990s to about 17,000 today.

The buying and selling of parental rights cannot be an improvement on the current condition. In most of the instances where children are removed from their natural parents, substance abuse is a key reason. Do we really want a policy that would transfer cash from adoptive parents to those who would, in many instances, convert it to illegal purchases on our nation's streets?

Herbert W. Stupp
CEO, Little Flower
Children & Family Services
Brooklyn, N.Y.

KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON REPLIES: Congratulations and sincere thanks to Mr. Stupp and Little Flower for their excellent work in finding homes for children who need them. But I disagree that liberalization of adoption practices "cannot be an improvement on the current condition." Under current regulations, parental rights and money both change hands, but the money goes primarily to lawyers, bureaucrats, and gray-market adoption fixers.

If a private couple chooses to compensate a pregnant woman for participating in an adoption—on certain conditions, such as taking her pre-natal vitamins and not smoking crack—the results are: The couple spends money that was going to be spent anyway; a pregnant woman receives medical care and financial assistance; financial incentives protect the health of a vulnerable child; parental rights change hands, subject to review by a judge or some other responsible party; a child goes into an adoptive home rather than into the social-welfare bureaucracy.

Is that not an improvement?

CORRECTION

In "Nuclear Power? Yes, Please" (June 16), Iain Murray attributed an Amory Lovins quote—"It'd be a little short of disastrous for us to discover a source of clean, cheap, abundant energy because of what we might do with it"—to a 1977 interview with *Playboy*. In fact, the quote appeared that year in *Mother Earth News*'s "Plowboy Interview" feature.

NATIONAL REVIEW encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com. Please include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters will be edited for space and clarity.

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THE WEEK

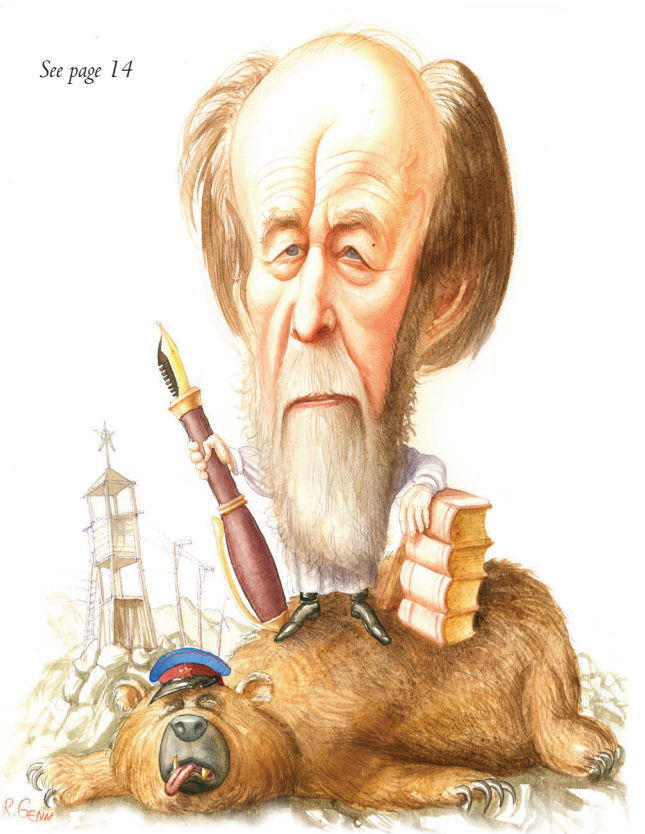
■ Don't try this at home, guys: "Well, honey, 99 percent of the time I've been faithful to you . . ."

■ What began as a trivial and unedifying sally in the presidential campaign became something more. John McCain ran an ad comparing Barack Obama to Paris Hilton and Britney Spears, suggesting that he too had more fame than merit. Some of Obama's supporters, notably Bob Herbert of the *New York Times*, decided that the ad had a racial subtext, associating the black candidate with promiscuous young white women. Obama chose the moment to revive his accusation that the Republicans are using his race against him. The McCain campaign hit back hard, saying, accurately, that it was Obama who was playing the race card. The Obama campaign, not used to being called out for its calculated racial politicking, flailed around, denying that Obama had meant what he plainly said. Obama has lost this round, but look for the race card to resurface. Too many of his supporters, and the candidate himself, seem to believe that there is no legitimate reason to resist his rise and that therefore any campaign against him must be scurrilous. It is an obnoxious assumption, and if acted upon it will lead surely and justly to Obama's defeat.

■ McCain showed off his "populist" side in a recent ad. The ad said that we are "worse off than we were four years ago." It also noted that McCain had taken on tobacco, oil, and drug companies. This anti-corporate posturing is, on the merits, pretty hard to defend: We would wager that the drug companies, for example, have done more good for more people than Senator McCain ever has. The ad makes little sense as a campaign tactic, either. We understand that McCain needs to convince the public that he can distinguish between the interests of corporations and the national interest. But there are better ways of doing it: for instance, by taking on corporate welfare, or by standing for middle-class tax relief. Voters who want leaders to express a generalized hostility toward unpopular industries are not going to choose a Republican for president, let alone one who promises to cut corporate tax rates. Obama is portraying that promise as a favor to Big Oil: a demagogic charge, to be sure, but one whose premises McCain has conceded.

■ John Edwards's confession that he had an affair with former campaign videographer Rielle Hunter was front-page news, and possible holes in his story—he denied fathering Hunter's out-of-wedlock child, saying he would take "any test necessary" to prove it, though Hunter's lawyer declared that she would "not participate"—have been well covered elsewhere. Edwards is a still-youthful two-time presidential candidate, who was angling for a role in the Obama administration (maybe attorney general). We have the *National Enquirer* to thank for being spared this prospect.

See page 14



ROMAN GENN

■ Since Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign began to sputter, way back when, the Democratic political class has been fixated on the infighting and internal rivalries that plagued the effort. Did Mark Penn say this? Did Howard Wolfson do that? Who was screaming? Who was yelling? It's the kind of thing that fascinates some in Washington. Now we have a trove of e-mails, memos, and other documents from the campaign, published in *The Atlantic* along with an article telling us that the Clinton campaign was, well, riven by infighting and internal rivalries. You won't find much news in the account, but you will find definitive proof that the Clinton campaign had more than its share of, shall we say, difficult personalities. But don't forget that even with her problems, Clinton beat Obama in primary after primary, sometimes by landslides, coming down the stretch. She couldn't catch up, but she proved quite emphatically that Obama could be beaten, even by an imperfect candidate with an imperfect campaign. Republicans should hope that Democrats stay focused on the who-said-what stories while ignoring that basic fact.

■ Question: What's the difference between MoveOn.org and a mob protection racket? Answer: not much. At least that's the way it looks after a former top MoveOn official, a man named

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It's an ambitious plan that will require a total commitment at all levels in the Exelon family of companies. And that's precisely what we intend to do. For details, go to exeloncorp.com.

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The Week...

Tom Matzzie, announced that he is forming a new group, Accountable America, to threaten big Republican political donors. The *New York Times* reports Matzzie is sending a letter to those donors, warning them that, should they continue to give, they face "a variety of potential dangers, including legal trouble, public exposure and watchdog groups digging through their lives." In other words: Nice little store you've got here. Be a shame if anything were to happen to it. Now you won't be making any trouble, will you? Matzzie told the *Times* he wants to "stop the Swift Boating before it gets off the ground." All Matzzie means by "Swift Boating," of course, is the expression of political views he finds uncongenial. There is thuggery in this race—in the person of Tom Matzzie and his allies on the left. It would be nice if there were some centrist Democrats with the courage to call it what it is.

■ According to the latest official statistics, the economy shrank by 0.2 percent in the last quarter of last year, then grew by 0.9 percent and 1.9 percent in the first two quarters of this one. In other words: We have had no recession, and growth is picking up. Employment, a lagging indicator, should revive soon. Unfortunately, inflation is likely to increase, too, the delayed result of the ever-looser monetary policy the Fed has run. Conservatives should stand for sound money, provide tax relief so that middle-class families' paychecks go farther, propose free-market reforms that reduce the price of oil, food, and health care, and do their best to ignore the people who have been spreading nightmarish visions of depression and crisis.

■ After the House adjourned for summer recess without voting on an energy bill, half a dozen Republicans stayed in the empty chamber, razzing the majority and calling for offshore drilling. Their number swelled to about 20 as word got out; tourists and aides were invited in; though the C-SPAN cameras were switched off, the Republicans sent reports of their doings via Twitter, and cellphone to Rush Limbaugh. Great fun was had by all, and scientists agree there may indeed be life in the House GOP caucus. But seriously, folks. Legislative bodies have rules for good reason: to maintain decorum, to see that business is done, to protect both majority and minority rights. The saving comedy of American politics allows us to write this off as a stunt—so long as everyone knows it was unseemly, and plans not to make a habit of it.

■ Pelosi has clearly been feeling the pressure, and has recently said that she might allow a vote on drilling after all. Unfortunately, she wants legislation along the lines of what ten senators recently offered as a compromise. Their bill would allow *very* limited offshore energy exploration in exchange for over $80 billion in new federal spending on alternative sources of energy. There is a simpler solution. The congressional ban on drilling has to be renewed each year, and the current ban expires in September. Congressional Republicans and President Bush should fight to stop it from living on.

■ In the first week following its publication, *Know Your Power*, by Speaker Pelosi, sold all of 2,737 copies. Then the House adjourned and, freed of annoyances like energy legislation and the mortgage crisis, Pelosi went on tour to promote it. Even so, sales have been slow, and you can't blame her for being disappointed. When Jim Wright was speaker of the House, *he* never had any trouble selling books.

■ At a campaign stop in St. Cloud, Democratic-Farmer-Labor party candidate Al Franken, who hopes to represent Minnesota in the U.S. Senate, was greeted by an audience of one, which isn't all that much worse than he did as a radio host for Air America.

■ Sens. Lindsey Graham and Joe Lieberman, top McCain advisers, proposed legislation to counter the worst excesses of the Supreme Court's *Boumediene* ruling, which gave enemy combatants a constitutional right to challenge their detention in federal court. Responding to attorney general Michael Mukasey's plea for congressional intervention, the bill would reaffirm that the nation remains at war and thus that enemy combatants may be detained until the termination of hostilities. Further, it would forbid courts to order that detainees be transported into the U.S. for hearings or, worse, release; direct that all petitions be filed in a single district court (in Washington) and assigned to judges in a manner that avoids inconsistent rulings; and prescribe rules that give the government a presumption in favor of detention (as it already has in bail proceedings for serious criminals) while protecting our soldiers and intelligence agents from having to offer in-court testimony. The bill would also limit *Boumediene* to detention cases, underscoring that the ruling does not affect military-commission trials for war criminals. Instead of passing the bill or proposing alternatives, Democrats appear happy to idle as courts forge the more combatant-friendly procedures that their base prefers. Graham and Lieberman are wise to keep *Boumediene*—and the Supreme Court—in the front of voters' minds.

■ A military-commission trial finally took place. The tribunal, assimilating the anti-war Left's critique of it, seemed bent on proving it could be even more defendant-friendly than a civilian court. Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's personal bodyguard and confidant, apprehended in possession of surface-to-air missiles and Qaeda code references for "nuclear," "chemical," and "biological" weapons, was sentenced to an appalling six months in prison (five and a half years minus time already served) on a war-crimes conviction. Hamdan was proved beyond cavil to have helped keep bin Laden alive and the terror network viable. Yet the judge, Navy captain Keith Allred, bought the narrative that a terrorist is not a serious threat unless he is tied to a specific attack. At the trial's guilt phase, Hamdan—though convicted of providing material support to al-Qaeda—was implausibly acquitted of conspiracy, thanks to

NEWSCOM

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Are Democrats Less Patriotic Than Republicans?

OVER THE COURSE of a generation, the far right in America has peddled a story that says conservatives love their country more than liberals. That's patently false. But it's worth asking: What *is* true patriotism?

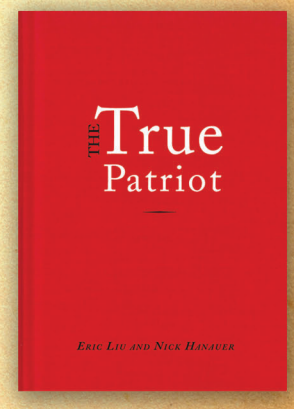
IS IT PATRIOTIC—or even conservative—to support an aggressive expansion of government power to eavesdrop?

IS IT PATRIOTIC—or even conservative—to support tax and fiscal policies that let the wealthiest off the hook, put more burdens on the middle class, and create a massive debt and deficit for the next generation to clean up?

IS IT PATRIOTIC—or even conservative—to throw America's great military into wars and nation-building adventures that have flimsy justification and no definable end?

IS IT PATRIOTIC—or even conservative—to despoil, for short-term profit, America's natural resources and rob our children of their rightful bounty?

We're Democrats, and we've written a little book about the moral code of patriotism. We believe that true patriotism belongs to neither party—but that there are false patriots in both. We believe that true patriotism means progress, pragmatism, and country above self. And we think there are conservatives who would agree. What do *you* believe?



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The Week...

dubious jury instructions and favorable evidentiary rulings. At sentencing, Allred refused to permit consideration of the 9/11 attacks—the ones that triggered the war in which Hamdan was fighting. Civilian trials carry many national-security risks, but terrorists nowhere near Hamdan's culpability level have routinely been jailed for life. After years of debate, the commissions may prove to be their own undoing.

■ Determined to end its troubled anthrax investigation, the Justice Department held a press conference to identify Bruce Ivins, a microbiologist at the Army's infectious-diseases laboratory in Maryland, as the lone culprit. Investigators showed, for example, that Ivins withheld from them a flask whose samples matched the genetic fingerprint of the anthrax letters; sent an e-mail after 9/11 claiming bin Laden had "anthrax" and had "just decreed death to all Jews and all Americans"—language strikingly similar to that of the anthrax letters; had no coherent explanation for working late nights right before the letters were mailed; and maintained a mailbox, under an assumed name, in a post office that sold envelopes with a peculiar printing defect—the same kind used to mail the anthrax letters. Ivins, said to be mentally disturbed, committed suicide upon learning he would be charged. He was never indicted. The allegation will never be tested in a trial. A hundred other scientists had access to the flask. The government has no compelling evidence placing Ivins at the Princeton box—hours from his home—where the letters were mailed. And, most significant, DOJ spent years convinced that a different scientist was the terrorist—and paid him a settlement of nearly $6 million. Case not quite closed.

■ Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick just can't stay out of trouble. A day after serving a jail sentence for violating bond on a perjury case, he allegedly violated bond on an assault case.

HANS NELEMAN/GETTY

Idle Youth Vote

There's an old story of an ancient bureaucrat at the British Foreign Office who, after working from 1903 to 1950, reminisced that "year after year the worriers and fretters would come to me with awful predictions of the outbreak of war. I denied it each time. I was wrong only twice."

Well, I'm waiting to be wrong even once about the youth vote. Admittedly, I haven't been at my desk for half a century, but every four years I'm told that *this* year will be different, this year the vote-rockers will do that voodoo they've never done well, and—this time!—they'll sweep a progressive, youth-oriented, Generation-XYZ-friendly guy into office.

They said it about Howard Dean, and he blew up after the "Deaniacs" failed to turn out. Later they said it about John Kerry; the young people would rise up in anger over an unjust war. In fairness, 2004 saw the biggest surge in young voters in twelve years. But George W. Bush was reelected. Under-30 was the only age demographic that Kerry won. They just didn't matter that much.

In 2000, the new digerati prophesied that Al Gore—the first cyber-savvy candidate, or somesuch—would benefit from the rising up of the Internet generation. Alas, most couldn't be bothered to rise off their couches. Gore beat Bush by a whopping two points among 18-to-29-year-olds. In 1972, the modern *fons et origo* of youth-vote hype, Democrats were convinced that the lowering of the voting age would yield a progressive tide of first-time voters the likes of which Western man had not seen since the first Greek democrat asked for a show of hands. McGovern split the youth vote. Meanwhile, Nixon won the plain old vote in a landslide.

Ah, but this time will be different. These young'uns, they like Obama, not the "white-haired dude," as Paris Hilton likes to call McCain. And the data must give Obama some comfort—and some concern. He won the Iowa caucuses thanks to an enormous turnout among young voters. But he lost in New Hampshire because the same demographic failed to materialize for him. A recent Gallup poll found that, among registered voters, Obama leads by a few points. Among likely voters—who tend to be older—Obama trails McCain. This should worry Obama, because history shows that young voters are the least reliable voters. They get distracted by shiny things—TV, iPod glare, whatever—and fail to make it to the polls. Meanwhile, the oldsters, they've got nothing better to do.

The youth vote may indeed be decisive this time around. Obama's messianic glow may outshine that of any Game Boy. It's a Democratic year, the Obama campaign has worked youngsters like none before, and, despite skyscraping piles of steaming, uh, nonsense from self-described youth activists insisting otherwise, the "youth vote" is liberal and partisan. So if Democratic turnout is big, the youth vote will likely be big too.

But every four years I'm told that this is the year young people will be decisive—and every four years I say, "No, it's not." So far I've always been right and they've always been wrong. Maybe that will change this year, but I bet it won't.

—Jonah Goldberg

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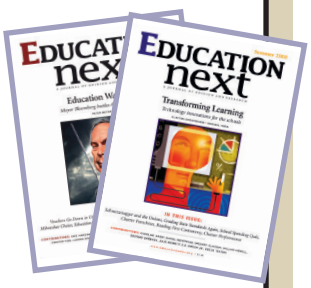

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How Do We Transform Our Schools?

The 2008 *Education Next*–PEPG Survey

Americans clearly have had their fill of a sluggish economy and an unpopular war. Their frustration now may also extend to public education. In this, the second annual national survey of U.S. adults, conducted by the polling firm Knowledge Networks under the auspices of *Education Next* and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University, we observe a public that takes an increasingly critical view both of public schools as they exist today and, perhaps ironically, of many prominent reforms designed to improve them. Local public schools receive lower marks than they did a year ago. More significantly, survey respondents claim that their local post offices and police forces outperform their local schools.

—William G. Howell, Martin R. West, and Paul E. Peterson

The Early Education of Our Next President

Both candidates were mainly taught at home

Whether it is the image of Abraham Lincoln studying by log cabin candlelight or George Washington dutifully copying the *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* into his schoolboy notebooks, presidential schooling has long been a national fascination. Today we have a graduate of Columbia College and Harvard Law (Barack Obama) taking on a graduate of the Naval Academy and National War College (McCain) But it is the early schooling—how did they get there?—that is most fascinating.

—Peter Meyer

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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The Week...

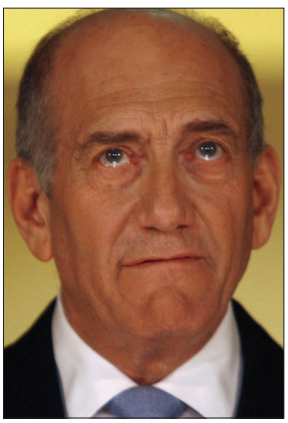
The former case arose from his testimony in a civil trial that he hadn't been intimate with his chief of staff, the latter from his alleged assault of two court officers trying to serve a subpoena to his friend. His problems resonate far beyond his office: Kilpatrick's mother nearly lost her House seat in the Democratic primary, and some speculate his behavior could hurt Obama's chances in Michigan by skewing white voters' perceptions of black politicians. We trust that Michigan voters can tell the difference between Obama and the sexy-text-message-sending city leader. We're far more worried about the impact Kilpatrick and the circus sideshow he has created will have on his already-suffering city.

■ Some observers—most notably, *Reason* magazine's Radley Balko—have long been documenting U.S. police forces' increasingly militaristic approach to the drug war. Their latest example is among the most shocking: After intercepting 32 pounds of marijuana in a package addressed to the residence of Cheye Calvo, mayor of Berwyn Heights, Md., police sent in a SWAT team. In a no-knock raid (the theory is that if police announce themselves, drug offenders will flush their stashes), the officers rammed through the door, shot the mayor's two black Labradors, and restrained him and his mother-in-law for almost two hours. Since, Calvo has been cleared of any wrongdoing; police now suspect the package was part of a scheme to send drugs to unknowing recipients. This is the kind of overkill that comes from declaring domestic "wars."

■ We have been here before. In 1936 and 1980, as now, the Olympics were held in powerful despotic states, which used the games as a promotional spectacle and imposed various restrictions on journalists, athletes, and their own bystanding subjects. Compared with the great crimes of these regimes, or even their business as usual, their Olympic misdeeds were small potatoes. Compared with the ideal of sportsmanship, they seem black. Yet the Olympic movement invites these situations. Its structure promotes nationalism, and the cult of fitness and team spirit fits easily with nationalism and statism of the worst kind. The Olympics has no antibodies for fighting the totalitarian temptation. In 30 years, we will be having the same qualms about another Olympics, in another unsavory country. The sandlot and the major leagues look awfully good right now.

■ How high-minded of Moqtada al-Sadr. After his forces were routed by American troops and the Iraqi army in Basra, Sadr City, and Amarah, he decided to disband his militia—or most of it—and make it a social-services organization. This is a declaration of surrender, and another blow against thuggery in Iraq. Since the Iraqi army took control of the key southern port city of Basra from Sadr, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, mortar attacks have dropped by roughly 90 percent, and only one or two bodies a day have shown up in the morgue (as opposed to 30 beforehand). Sadr was the cat's-paw of Iran, where he fled as soon as the surge was announced in January 2007. His permanent diminution on the Iraqi scene would be a boon to the country's future.

■ Pakistan has always been a dictatorship masquerading as a democracy, and right now this equivocal country is very troubling. Pervez Musharraf, its president, seized power in 1999, and the legitimacy of his rule has been under a shadow from the start. Earlier this year, his party lost elections, but in spite of that he says he will not leave office. Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari, the winners of the election, have formed a coalition to govern, but they and their factions are rivals who have in common only their resentment of Musharraf. Together, they are starting a process of impeaching him. Not as parliamentary or legalistic as it may look, this is really a veneer for a personal power struggle that will destabilize one and all, and may well turn violent. Mutual accusations of corruption and political abuses fly. Nobody can be sure where loyalties ultimately lie, and the country is already a hotbed of riots, suicide bombers, and jihadis who go on murder sprees in Kashmir and India. In any case, the intelligence service, known as ISI, for years has been the secret power in the land. U.S. officials have evidence that ISI agents were responsible for the attempt earlier this year to kill Afghan president Hamid Karzai at a military parade, as well as for the bomb this July that destroyed the Indian embassy in Kabul. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban look like the only winners in all this.



ELIANA APONTE/AFP

■ The resignation of prime minister Ehud Olmert has gladdened most Israelis. In spite of his mounting unpopularity, he had been clinging to office using all the black arts of politics. Always a man of the right, he suddenly and cynically swerved to the left, thereby alienating his former power base. Then the botched 2006 war with Hezbollah dramatically exposed his limitations, allowing Hezbollah to claim victory and encouraging the Arab and Muslim world to believe that Israel could be destroyed. He sank to record lows in the polls, and Israelis began to speculate on how to be rid of him. Meanwhile, rumors of his shady dealings initiated multiple police investigations that continue. He responded by pledging to negotiate peace with the Palestinians, remove Israeli settlements from the West Bank, perhaps divide Jerusalem, and conduct negotiations with Syria. None of this was realistic, and there is no doubt that he knew it, but it permitted him to carry on as before. Finally, an American well-wisher testified that he had paid expenses for Olmert amounting to a six-figure sum. At that point, Olmert's resignation was only a matter of time. Determined though he was, public opinion in the end proved strong enough to pry him out of office.

■ The social benefits of pet ownership are manifold. Dog owners are specially blessed by the extra opportunities a daily walk

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NR408

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The Week...

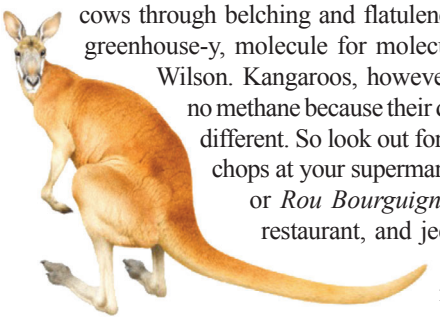
affords for greeting, meeting, chatting, and flirting. It is apparently the flirting that most alarms Saudi Arabia's religious police, the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. They have begun enforcing a ban on the sale or public walking of cats and dogs in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Mr. Othman al-Othman, district enforcer for the CftPoVatPoV, told a regional newspaper that young men were "using cats and dogs to make passes at women and pester families." It is encouraging to see that the edict is meeting with much scorn from urban Saudis, who have taken to pets in a big way in recent years. Many have pointed out that Muhammad himself was fond of cats. Whether he used them as an aid to flirtation, it would of course be improper to speculate.

■ The left wing of the Democratic party still holds up Canada's "single payer"—that is, entirely government-financed—health-care system as a model. The latest innovation of that system: Overextended doctors are deciding which patients will get treated by drawing names out of a hat. They are rationing health care, in other words, by lottery. Dr. Ken Runciman of Ontario told Canada's *National Post* that he had to cut his workload and couldn't find a better method. "It was just my way of trying to minimize the bias . . . rather than going through the list and saying 'I don't like you, and I don't like you.'" Dr. Runciman has cut 100 patients from his practice, while another doctor in Newfoundland has cut 500 patients. All in all, too few Canadian doctors means that approximately 5 million Canadians are now without family care. What was that about "universal coverage"?

■ Social scientists in Britain have conducted a survey of attitudes toward Islam among the nation's university students. Of the Muslim students, one-third support the creation of a worldwide caliphate, about the same number believe that killing in the name of Islam is justifiable, and two-fifths want the sharia code incorporated into British law. Among non-Muslims, 55 percent believe that Islam is incompatible with democracy, and nearly one in ten have "little respect" for Muslims. "The solution is to stop talking about celebrating diversity and focus on integration and assimilation," declared one academic. And perhaps the unassimilable Muslims should be encouraged to resettle in Muslim nations, where they will surely be much happier, and free to indulge their fantasies of a worldwide caliphate without disturbance from infidel sociologists.

■ The Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union recently negotiated a new five-year contract at the Tyson Foods poultry-processing plant in Shelbyville, Tenn. Under the new contract the plant's workers were to get eight paid holidays, as before; but Labor Day was no longer to be one of the eight. It was replaced by the Muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr. This was another "accommodation" to the plant's Muslims, who constitute a large part of its workforce. The firm had already built a Muslim prayer room for them. (There is no Christian prayer room.) Facing public outrage, the RWDSU was at first brazen, but the contract has now been renegotiated, and Labor Day reinstated. We quietly wonder how many other "accommodations" will be made by other unions at other plants before the public becomes resigned to them and weary protesting. Five? Ten? The future comes apace.

■ Climate-change hysteria is at least offering endless opportunities for entrepreneurship. We suspect, at any rate, that this may be the motivation of Australian scientist George Wilson, who is urging us to eat kangaroo meat in order to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. The methane gas produced by sheep and cows through belching and flatulence is 25 times more greenhouse-y, molecule for molecule, than CO_2, says Wilson. Kangaroos, however, produce virtually no methane because their digestive systems are different. So look out for roo burgers and roo chops at your supermarket, Roo Wellington or *Rou Bourguignon* at your favorite restaurant, and jeers of "Where's the roo?" by campaigning politicians.



■ Some years ago we quipped that if a tornado were ever to pass through Manhattan, the *New York Times* headline on the story would include: "Blacks and Hispanics Hardest Hit." Well, well, life imitates art. Here is Rep. James Clyburn (D., S.C.) to tell us that "African-Americans are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change." The congressman was launching a campaign to get black Americans more involved in environmental activism. This comes shortly after publication of a paper by a "climate justice" advocacy group making similar claims. In line with the longstanding tendency of the Left to bond all issues together in a grand critique of capitalist society, "racial justice" and "climate change" are now indissolubly joined.

■ Anne Armstrong, who died on July 30 at age 80, was a longtime Republican leader and adviser to presidents from Richard Nixon to George H. W. Bush. She attained her greatest public prominence in 1976, when Gerald Ford named her ambassador to Great Britain. Though she served in that role for only a year, she made the most of her time; Henry Kissinger, in his memoirs, calls her "the splendid American ambassador to London" and quotes her penetrating analysis of Britain's Rhodesia policy, which was a great help to him in defusing a potential crisis. The *New York Times* said the British had "taken an instant liking to her," but she could also be blunt when necessary. A decade later, when secretary of state George P. Shultz bristled at being strapped to a lie detector, Armstrong (by then head of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board) told him, "I took a polygraph test, and I didn't get on *my* high horse." During her long and busy life, she also chaired the Republican National Committee and found time to raise five children. R.I.P.

■ In the early 1970s, when John M. Olin wanted to turn his private foundation into the powerful underwriter of ideas that it would become, he summoned Frank O'Connell to his office. "I would like to use this fortune to help preserve the system which made its accumulation possible," said Olin. O'Connell, a labor

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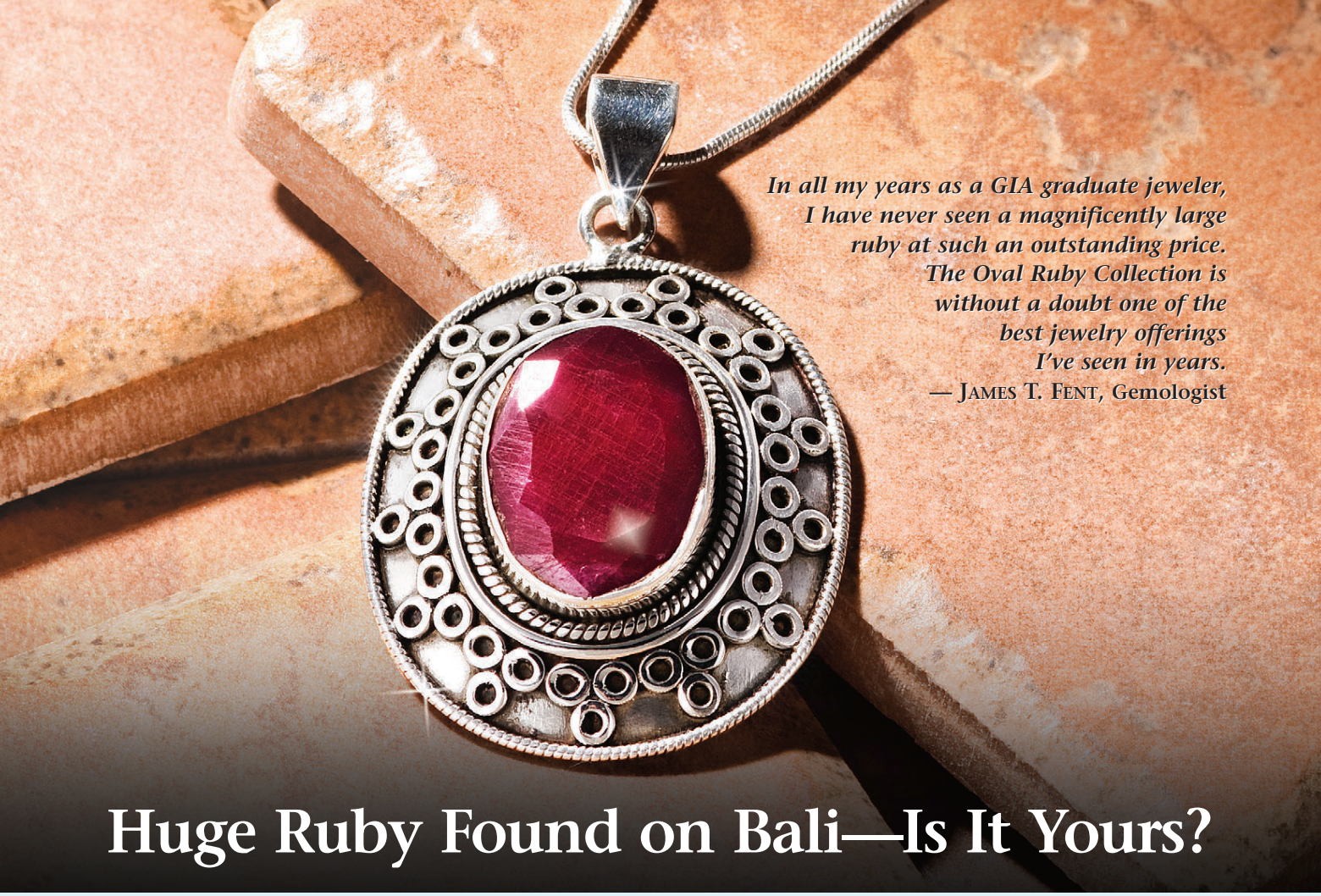

In all my years as a GIA graduate jeweler, I have never seen a magnificently large ruby at such an outstanding price. The Oval Ruby Collection is without a doubt one of the best jewelry offerings I've seen in years.
— James T. Fent, Gemologist

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lawyer, agreed to become the foundation's first executive director. Conservatives everywhere benefited from his work behind the scenes of their movement. A native New Yorker, he championed economic freedom and eventually retired to the Sierras, where he listened to the music of Cole Porter and read the words of Shakespeare (or, as he would insist, Edward de Vere—he was a confirmed Oxfordian in the debate over authorship). To the end, which came in June at the age of 94, he was a valued friend of this magazine. R.I.P.

THE WORLD

Caucasus Belli

THOUGH the order "Lights, camera, action!" was given by Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili, the wartime drama now unfolding in the Caucasus was devised, scripted, directed, and produced in Moscow by Vladimir Putin and his fellow *siloviki* (former-KGB kleptocrats). The Russians say their invasion was meant to protect the rights of a persecuted minority; in fact, it was nothing of the kind. For almost two decades Russia has sought to divide and destabilize the new independent states in its former backyard by establishing, financing, and protecting "breakaway" ethnic statelets—such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, within the sovereign territory of Georgia.

These statelets fulfill two important functions. First, they provide the *siloviki* with country estates. Almost none of the officials in the South Ossetian government are locals; most are high-ranking former KGB officials from other parts of Russia. South Ossetia provides them with a safe haven in which they can launder money, run smuggling operations, traffic in women, divert official funds into their pockets, and wage small but useful wars. Those wars are the second function: They punish pro-Western states such as Georgia, which is already weakened by division.

South Ossetian "forces" have been bombing Georgian villages at irregular intervals for years, but more intensely of late. Saakashvili sought to regain at least some of South Ossetia with a lightning raid, whereupon a massive Russian response, quite manifestly ready to go, was launched. Russian tanks rolled into South Ossetia; another pro-Russian force attacked Georgia in the part of Abkhazia that Georgia still controlled; and Georgia's modest army was forced to withdraw. Russian planes continued to bomb central Georgia, and when Saakashvili proposed a ceasefire, the Russians at first refused to talk to him, then started multiplying conditions for their acceptance.

The Russians remain bent on toppling the elected Georgian regime, which they accuse of war crimes. There are plausible reports that the Georgian forces shelled villages in their incursion into South Ossetia, but they were overwhelmed so quickly that they simply could not have done anything on the scale alleged by the Kremlin. Besides, Russia's long patronage of South Ossetian attacks, its invasion across internationally recognized borders, and its relentless bombing of a country that had retreated and offered a ceasefire deprives it of any right to make such accusations. Russian policy is a war crime in itself.

What America and its allies must now do is to demonstrate that Russia has lost more than it has gained from this conflict. One first step should be to offer NATO membership to both Georgia and Ukraine. Only Germany stands in the way of such a decision, and the Germans should be told firmly that their opposition encouraged the *siloviki* to mount this attack. Second, we should ask Poland and the Czech Republic to hold referenda on installing a missile-defense system at once. Third, once the fighting has definitively stopped, the U.S. should offer a generous rebuilding program in Georgia on top of the humanitarian assistance flowing there now—to be carried out, in part, by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

What about economic sanctions, such as expelling Russia from the G8? Sanctions generally work better as a threat than as a policy, and Europeans are reluctant to lose the business they would cut off. So Russia should be quietly told that if it obstructs any of the policies outlined above, a list of economic sanctions will be progressively imposed. Russia looks stronger—economically and militarily—than it really is. The *siloviki* know that; so do we. We should make plain that if they continue along their current path of resuscitating the Soviet corpse, the whole world will know it.

OBITUARY

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, R.I.P.

AFTER the fall of the Soviet Union—so thunderous, so unexpected—the bystanders wondered who had brought it about. Was it the main actors on the spot, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, pulling sometimes in tandem, more often at loggerheads? Was it Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, who rallied the willpower of the West? Was it John Paul II, who inspired the men of iron in Poland?

A case could be made for all of them, but a case could also be made for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008). Certainly Solzhenitsyn was the bravest: Gorbachev and Yeltsin were powerful insiders, Reagan and Thatcher possessed nuclear weapons, the pope led a great and ancient church. Solzhenitsyn had a few devoted friends, and his words. With his words, he shook the evil empire.

His literary ambition was to equal the Russian writers of the 19th century, those Easter Island monuments of history and psychology: Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Belletrists say that his style is too relentless, too sarcastic to match theirs. But the style of his first work, and first masterpiece, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, was as clear as water. This was a novella by a 43-year-old former officer, former political prisoner, and current high-school teacher, describing, from experience and observation, the life of an ordinary Russian serving a ten-year sentence in the gulag. In a brief thaw, the Russian literary journal *Novy Mir* published it; Nikita Khrushchev praised it. The last lines are

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some of the simplest and most powerful in all literature. "The end of an unclouded day," Ivan thinks. "Almost a happy one. Just one of the 3,653 days of his sentence, from bell to bell. The extra three days"—here it comes—"were for leap years."

Solzhenitsyn's greatness as a witness, and a judge, was that he remembered the leap years. He would be as thorough an anti-Communist as the Communists were jailers. And whereas Communist thoroughness rested on indifference to the lives they brutalized, his rested on a passionate love for them, and outrage over their fate.

The Gulag Archipelago, in three volumes, was a travel book, a Fodor's for the heart of darkness. He added the second word of its title to everyone's vocabulary. Before him, the modern rhetoric of despotism was all drawn from the Nazi experience: Auschwitz stood for all extermination, Gestapo meant any uniformed murderer (or even any cop you disliked). Hitler had lost, so it was safe to hold him up as a bad example. Solzhenitsyn showed the world—which in truth had been shown often enough before, though it had not paid attention—that Communism, which still swaggered, was equally bad; and he showed them by telling this story, and this, and this. Philip Rieff called the *Gulag* "the greatest book of remembrance, the greatest martyrology, ever written."

His expulsion from his homeland and his acceptance of the Nobel Prize were high drama. This phase of his career peaked with his 1978 commencement address at Harvard. Americans acknowledged a prophet in their midst, but were puzzled by his manner. And indeed he misjudged the latent strengths of his new temporary home, even as he saw, with outsider's eyes, its weaknesses. NATIONAL REVIEW was honored to publish him during his American sojourn. His return to Russia was bittersweet. The old evil had passed, but the road to freedom was long and rocky.

Rest in peace. Other evils will have their day—Islamism, the ChiComs, Putin the tinpot despot. We extend our sympathy to his sons, and our gratitude to God that we saw such a witness, and that his witness was not in vain.

OBITUARY II

Peter Rodman, R.I.P.

As Russia's invasion of Georgia swept down the Caucasus, the editors of NATIONAL REVIEW asked each other: "What advice would Peter Rodman be giving us about this?"

From 1991, when he arrived at NR as a senior editor, until he fell ill a few months ago, Peter was something of an oracle on international politics to his NR colleagues. He could analyze any crisis with matchless clarity and calmly propose a sensible response to it—sometimes: "There is no solution to this problem. We simply have to contain and outlast it." When Peter spoke or wrote on foreign policy, everyone else thought himself an expert afterward. Accordingly we consulted him whenever a crisis arose even long after he formally left the magazine.

It helped that Peter arrived at NATIONAL REVIEW to write and oversee our coverage of foreign policy with an already-established reputation. He had been Henry Kissinger's aide and literary amanuensis both in and out of government from the late-Sixties onward. He came to wider public notice when he wrote (in *The American Spectator*) an eloquent defense of the Nixon-Kissinger conduct of U.S. policy toward Cambodia and Vietnam. His loyalty to the famous statesman, personal and philosophical, never wavered.

That loyalty was repaid fully—and variously. Among Kissinger's more lasting diplomatic achievements was his playing Cupid between Peter and Veronique Boulad. They married, produced two clever and charming children, Nicholas and Theodora, and made a home in northwest Washington, D.C., where they presided over lively parties at which bureaucratic rivals and political opponents became friends.

Peter remained a Kissingerian realist all his life. But his realism was a conservative one that made him equally at home in the Reagan administration. Between 1984 and 1990 he held a series of very senior positions in the State Department and the National Security Council. Between 2001 and March 2007 he served with distinction in the Pentagon.

Peter remained a Kissingerian realist all his life. But his realism was a conservative one that made him equally at home in the Reagan administration.

His full contribution to the security of America and the settling of intractable international disputes will not be known until future historians delve deeper into the archives. But it was clearly substantial and beneficial. Both his aides and his superiors have told of a stream of crisp, sensible, shrewd, and far-sighted advice from his pen that steered the country through rapids to calmer waters. His study of the Reagan Doctrine, *More Precious Than Peace*, describing the successful policy he helped formulate, allows us a privileged glimpse into how the Reagan administration helped reverse the hitherto irreversible juggernaut of Communism in the Third World.

In between bouts of government service Peter joined NATIONAL REVIEW, where he soon turned the initial respect of his colleagues into deep and abiding affection. He was the most engaging of colleagues as well as the wisest. When he was not being analytical (and sometimes when he was), his conversation was peppered with jokes, irony, wit, anecdote, quotation—and laughter at his own and other people's jokes. He was a fine writer—clear, readable, witty, and *quick*—on topics that ranged from North Korean nukes to the splendor of Benny Hill. And he was a sure guide on issues of life and death.

Words such as "brilliant," "shrewd," "clever," and "insightful" have been threaded through the tributes that have poured in from friends, acquaintances, and students of Peter since his death. They are just and fair. And they have been joined to words less often employed to describe Washington policymakers even on the friendliest occasions—words such as "kind," "humble," "thoughtful," "wise," and—quite simply—"good."

Peter was a friend in every respect. We will miss him enormously, and we extend our deepest condolences to Veronique, Theodora, and Nicholas.

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Professor Bart D. Ehrman is a razor-sharp lecturer and consummate scholar with a full command of his material. He is a Professor of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he has taught since 1988. He has received the Students' Undergraduate Teaching Award, the Hettleman Prize for Artistic and Scholarly Achievement, and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching.

His textbook on the New Testament is the most widely used in universities today. In addition to his textbook, Professor Ehrman has written dozens of book reviews and scholarly articles, and written or edited 17 books, among them, *Lost Christianities.*

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Wicca Economics

The theory with a magic leader

JOHN HOOD

JUST after the 2006 election, exultant Democrats and exasperated Republicans identified Iraq and corruption as the decisive issues, and predicted these issues would also shape the 2008 presidential race. They were half right. Voter perceptions of U.S. failure in Iraq and widespread corruption on Capitol Hill did mostly explain the GOP's loss of its hard-won congressional majority, but they are not driving the 2008 races, at least not anymore. Economic anxieties predominate—and if John McCain pulls off an upset in November, it will be because he raised big doubts about the wisdom and relevance of Obamanomics.

Critics called Ronald Reagan's 1980 program "voodoo economics" despite the fact that it was based on decades of solid (if innovative) research on how fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies affect economic growth. Barack Obama's economic agenda is far less coherent and lacks any organizing principle other than "change."

It criticizes the spending excesses of the Bush administration while promising further spending increases. It proposes to combat high energy prices by making it harder to bring energy to market. And it hearkens back to the industrial-era rhetoric of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, who proposed major federal investment in infrastructure, but pretends that all the new roads, transit lines, ports, and pipelines won't disturb Mother Earth one iota.

Obama's plan might be called "Wicca economics." It is pan-ideological, accepting and even embracing contradiction. It makes environmentalism into a ritualistic religion. Its response to hard realities, such as the impending entitlement calamity, is little more than wishful thinking. It depends wholly on the magical abilities of a charismatic leader.

On the political salience of economic issues, the polling numbers are stark. As the new Democratic Congress took office in January 2007, for example, 42 percent of respondents in a Pew Research Center survey identified the Iraq War as the most important problem facing the nation. Only 15 percent cited economic concerns. By the end of the year, the two issue bundles polled roughly equal. Now, in Pew's latest survey, 61 percent of voters say the economy is most important, with Iraq a distant second at 17 percent.

What do voters mean when they express concern about "the economy"? More often than not, what they really mean to say is "high prices." Although the economy has experienced several months of net job losses, few Americans have been directly affected. When the Labor Department takes the still-low jobless rate and adds in those working fewer hours than they want and those who've given up looking for jobs, it finds a rate of only about 10 percent. Recent Gallup surveys of employed Americans show that most—80 percent to 90 percent, depending on the question—say they're satisfied with their current pay, job security, and working conditions.

I'm not suggesting that job creation isn't an important political issue. But voter worries about inflation in energy, food, and other prices are more immediate and widespread. Price spikes affect everyone, and in the case of gasoline prices—the most significant number in American politics—they are highly visible and galling even when one's tank is full. In the July Pew survey, 45 percent of respondents singled out high prices as the most important economic problem, while only 13 percent pointed to jobs.

So why is the most common conservative and Republican charge against Obama's economic plan that it will raise federal taxes? It's true, of course. Obama says he'll raise the top income-tax rate back to approximately 40 percent, while nearly doubling the marginal rate on capital gains. He also wants to hike payroll taxes on high-income individuals, using the proceeds to "protect" Social Security (they would fall way, way short of that, actually). On the other end, he's promising tax relief for the middle class, including a $1,000-per-household "emergency energy rebate" to be financed with a windfall-profits tax.

ROMAN GENN

Mr. Hood is chairman and president of the John Locke Foundation, a North Carolina–based think tank, and serves on the board of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

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McCain, who once opposed President Bush's cuts in top marginal rates, now says he'd make them permanent. He warns that Obama's tax hikes will discourage job creation and encourage more tax dodging at the expense of investment and entrepreneurship. He's right. But this is an insufficient attack on Obamanomics. Polls indicate that tax rates rank low as an issue for independents. Swing voters will have a hard time buying a doom-and-gloom scenario in which a return to the tax rates of the 1990s would cause economic devastation; they don't remember the decade that way. And there's a far greater political payoff from attacking his economic program on other grounds.

McCain has, to his credit, already started on gas prices. It's a wise move, but he should be more explicit about the ripple effects they will have on other economic issues. For example, one of Obama's major economic initiatives is a $60 billion infrastructure bank to help finance the construction of new roads, bridges, ports, and other transportation assets. It's true that American governments have invested too little in the economy's circulatory system. But one of the little-appreciated aspects of the problem is that, because asphalt is made from petroleum, the cost of paving roads and building other facilities has been skyrocketing along with that of motor fuels. Lifting government impediments to oil exploration and refining would, among other things, make infrastructure dollars stretch farther.

Speaking of the nation's infrastructure deficit, which imposes major economic costs in the form of traffic congestion and lost competitiveness, McCain ought to champion innovative construction and financing solutions at the local and state levels while criticizing any Washington-centric approach. Obama's federal infrastructure bank would inevitably fund many "roads to nowhere" as local officials gamed the system and evaded responsibility for poor decisions. Furthermore, a major impediment to building new transportation corridors is that, due to overzealous regulators and overly broad wetlands rules, it's costly and time-consuming to obtain the permits. Obama is promising to make the problem worse, with tighter controls on land development. McCain ought to ask why Obama would rather protect endangered snails than alleviate congestion, replace unsafe bridges, or expand port facilities to boost exports.

McCain has other arguments to make about Obamanomics, regarding family budgets. As a longtime opponent of ethanol subsidies, McCain can press Obama to explain why he continues to support them despite their role in raising grocery prices across the board—by increasing the demand for corn, these subsidies jack up its cost, as well as that of corn-fed meats and dairy, and other vegetables that compete with corn for farmland. On utility rates, McCain should challenge Obama to join him in calling for an end to special telecommunications taxes, as well as to restrictions on natural-gas exploration and nuclear-power expansion. Make Obama explain how investing $150 billion in "green technologies" will bring any large-scale increases in power to the electric grid within the next two decades.

McCain should portray Obama as someone who talks abstractly about workers and fancifully about windmills while being unwilling to drill, pump, pave, or build anything.

Essentially, McCain should talk about the economy here and now—about the need to unleash American labor and know-how to start fixing America's problems—while portraying Obama as someone who talks abstractly about workers and fancifully about windmills while being unwilling to drill, pump, pave, or build anything.

Another major economic-policy difference between Obama and McCain, on trade, likely offers less political potential. Surveys from a variety of polling organizations show declining public support for trade agreements. This is partly because public understanding of the issue is woefully lacking—asked by Pew in April whether free-trade deals raise or lower prices for American consumers, only 29 percent of respondents said "lower." It should come as no surprise that in the same poll, 61 percent said free trade results in net job loss, with only 9 percent saying there was net job creation. The good news is that Obama is probably not being candid about his views on trade. And if he does try to renegotiate NAFTA, Canada and Mexico won't cooperate.

With voters reeling from today's high prices, the seemingly far-off issue of entitlements may be a non-starter. But it may also be one of McCain's best opportunities to score points against Obamanomics. There's little public appetite for major Medicare or Social Security reforms, admittedly, but most voters understand that the programs are unsustainable and will prompt major tax increases or benefit cuts in the future. At the very least, voters would like to see the federal government stop wasting scarce dollars now so that the future reckoning won't be catastrophic.

As a longtime foe of corporate welfare and the pork barrel, McCain is in a good position to pledge fiscal restraint. The Obama agenda, on the other hand, is chock-full of new spending promises—more than half a trillion dollars over five years according to his own campaign, and $1.4 trillion according to McCain's—and Obama has refused to agree to McCain's aggressive deficit-reduction goals.

The conventional wisdom is that voters don't care about budget deficits, and it's accurate to say that Republican-leaning voters don't tend to blame economic problems on them. But half of independents and three-fifths of Democrats do, and highly publicized cases of wasteful spending have proven potent weapons against incumbents in Congress and state elections.

The biggest challenge McCain has in taking on Obamanomics is that on a critical issue—cap-and-trade regulations on carbon emissions—his past positions are similar to those of his rival. While he can't just abandon the issue, McCain needs to make absolutely clear that he'd fight high prices for energy, food, and other goods today, by ending counterproductive subsidies and getting government out of the way of derricks and hardhats, while continuing to research new technologies for the future.

Add in a YouTube video showing pagans dancing around a stack of endangered snails, and he'd be in business. **NR**

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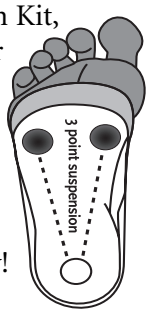

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Dr. Obama's Prescription

It isn't one we should want to take

JAMES CAPRETTA

MEMORIES of the Clinton health-care disaster should figure prominently in Democratic strategic planning. It was a debacle unlike any other in recent history, one the party will want to avoid repeating at all costs. In a few short months in 1994, the public went from strong support for the concept of "universal coverage" to overwhelming opposition to Bill and Hillary Clinton's plan. This collapse in political support was pivotal to the historic Republican takeover of Congress in the mid-term elections of that year. During his remaining time in office, Bill Clinton enjoyed his share of victories, but they were mainly defensive in nature and essentially protected the large government he had inherited. Gone for good were his ambitious plans to remake the country with an even more activist government.

What lessons have the Democrats, including their presumptive nominee, taken from this painful episode? Not the right ones, it seems—except for the need to cover their tracks. Democrats, Obama included, appear to think their problem in 1994 was poor marketing and opposition from powerful, well-funded special interests, not the substance of the plan. Hillary Clinton, in particular, likes to blame the infamous "Harry and Louise" ads, sponsored by the insurance industry, which depicted a typical couple at the kitchen table fretting over her plan's costs and restrictions. Instead of taking to heart Americans' reservations about how a massive expansion of government involvement would affect the quality of their health care, Obama is holding firm to his party's commitment to full government control—but doing all he can to hide this fact from the public.

That may turn out to be easier said than done. Obama is already on record pledging his allegiance to a single-payer approach, like those now operating in Canada and the United Kingdom. But Obama now says that his apparent 2003 endorsement of a government takeover, captured on a video that was posted on YouTube, was a misunderstanding. What he really meant, he now says, is that if the U.S. were starting from scratch, he would favor a single-payer plan. But since we aren't starting over, he wants to build on the current employer-based system, not replace it.

That would be reassuring to millions of swing voters who want reform but don't want to lose their job-based plans—if it were true. But in health care, the devil really is in the details. And despite Obama's rhetoric and protestations, his plan would destroy employer-based insurance, not preserve it, by pricing it out of business and subsidizing government-run alternatives. That would put the country on a fast track to government-run health care for everyone.

It's not hard to see how this would unfold. The Obama plan is built on four interrelated provisions. First, he would impose on all employers a new "pay or play" mandate. Businesses would be forced to either offer coverage and pay a substantial portion of the premium or else pay a tax to the federal government. Second, he would create a new national insurance exchange, through which uninsured Americans and others who don't have employer-based insurance would get their coverage. The government would dictate what would and would not be covered by the insurance offered through the exchange. Third, he would include among its offerings a new, government-run insurance option. And fourth, he would offer expensive new subsidies to offset the premiums for millions of low- to moderate-income households that get their insurance through the exchange.

The fallout from such a plan is entirely predictable. Under "pay or play," employers would find it increasingly attractive to drop their company-sponsored plans in favor of paying the tax. The tax, after all, would be based on wages, not health care, and wage growth has lagged far behind health-care cost inflation for more than three decades. Over time, without other reforms, paying the tax would almost certainly be less expensive for most businesses than organizing coverage themselves. And with the government making other options available, employers would finally be able to drop their insurance plans without simply abandoning their workers.

ROMAN GENN

Mr. Capretta is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a health-policy consultant.

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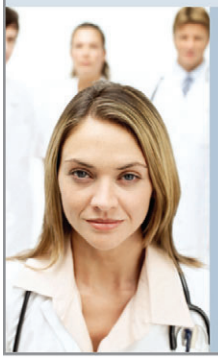

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As more and more employers chose to "pay" instead of "play," millions of workers would be pushed into the national insurance exchange, where they would, in theory, have a choice between private insurance and the new, publicly run option. Obama and other Democrats like to say this structure would foster healthy competition between the public and private sectors. But this would not be real, market-style competition. The government would run the new, public insurance option just as it runs Medicare and Medicaid, with plenty of price controls and cost shifting. Doctors and hospitals would have no choice but to accept the government-dictated fees imposed by a federal bureaucracy. These below-market fees would allow the public option to charge premiums considerably lower than those charged by private insurers. And with these artificially low premiums, the public insurance option would become the de facto plan of choice for millions of workers. A recent analysis of an Obama-like plan projected 40 million new enrollees in the public option in Year One. That would be like doubling the size of Medicare—overnight.

Once the plan had been set in motion, the momentum toward a full government takeover would be impossible to reverse. Congress would have every incentive to cut doctor and hospital fees further, to control the costs of the new insurance subsidies promised by Obama. It would not be long before private insurers, lacking this ability to control their costs by fiat, abandoned the marketplace entirely.

John McCain has a much better approach to reform, one that would give financial control to individuals and families, not the government. Armed with refundable tax credits, consumers would be able to choose the provider and plan that suit them best. By exercising this choice, they would hold insurers, doctors, and hospitals accountable for the coverage and services they receive, instead of waiting for bureaucrats to do it for them. This kind of functioning marketplace is the only way to improve efficiency and provide better value for the money spent.

To win the health-care debate, Republicans must sing the virtues of McCain's approach, but they must also discredit the Obama plan. The GOP needs to remind voters of what they instinctively understand: Government-run health care leads to reduced access, deterioration in the quality of care, and rationing, even as it burdens the economy and destroys jobs.

It is an iron law that government-run health-care systems eventually resort to price controls to keep costs down, and that such controls reduce the number of willing suppliers. This is not some economist's theory; it is observable all over the world. Some countries manage the problem better than others, but every one that relies heavily on a central government to allocate health-care resources eventually experiences some level of rationing as a consequence of politically driven decisions to limit budgetary exposure. What's more, in an attempt to ensure equity, these countries also restrict or eliminate citizens' ability to purchase health care outside the system, to prevent the wealthy from jumping to the front of every queue.

This is what ObamaCare would mean for U.S. consumers. It would vastly expand costs and government control, even as Medicare and Medicaid already threaten to push the federal budget deficit to dangerous levels. If most of the country is enrolled in publicly sponsored insurance, as the Obama plan implies, fiscal reality will push Congress to adopt ever more draconian cost-control measures. It will only be a matter of time before stories start circulating, as they do in other countries, of months-long waits for treatment, and of care denied to patients who fall outside formal or informal "guidelines" for providing services.

Making this case will be harder than defeating ClintonCare was in 1994, as Obama's plan is calculatedly short on details. He will never admit that it would lead to rationing of care, and he won't make the same mistake the Clintons did when they issued their 1,300-plus-page legislative proposal. But with persistence, voters can be shown again that there really are only two ways out of the current situation in health care. We can turn over all decision-making to the government and accept the consequences of an unresponsive, bureaucratic system; or we can build a functioning marketplace, with government oversight, that puts consumers in control. Obama and the Democrats have always believed the government is the only answer, and their plan is constructed accordingly. It won't take much to convince voters that this is the Democrats' real goal; what's needed are reminders of what would happen if they succeed in reaching it. **NR**

Life Opportunities

Why McCain shouldn't run away from the abortion issue

RAMESH PONNURU

TALKING about social issues obviously makes John McCain uncomfortable, and he has said that he is not passionate about them. He doesn't have to become more enthusiastic. But he does need to understand that the most politically salient of the social issues, abortion, is a vulnerability of Barack Obama. To win the presidency, McCain needs to take advantage of that weakness.

McCain has consistently voted against abortion since coming to Congress. But for much of McCain's political career, the conventional wisdom was that opposition to abortion is a losing issue: Republican politicians might have to be pro-life to survive primaries, but then had to mollify the pro-choice majority in general elections. That conventional wisdom has never been true. Surveys have consistently found that pro-lifers are more likely to vote on abortion than pro-choicers, and that greater intensity has translated into a political benefit for pro-life candidates. With time, moreover, the notion that the pro-life position is a political liability has become even less tenable.

More Americans describe themselves as pro-choice than pro-life. But over the last dozen years, the margin by which they do so has shrunk to single digits. People are more willing to call themselves pro-life for several reasons, the most important being the debate over partial-birth abortion, the development of ultrasound technology, and the decline of anti-abortion violence.

The public's policy views, meanwhile, are more pro-life than their self-labeling would indicate. Gallup asks respondents whether abortion should be allowed in all, most, a few, or no circumstances. In its latest survey, from May, 57 percent chose the two restrictive options and 41 percent the two permissive ones. Independent vot-

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ers (those unaffiliated with either political party) had the same basic preferences: They split 54–44 for the pro-life options.

In a June survey for the National Right to Life Committee, the Polling Company found that 38 percent of the public believed that abortion should be allowed for any reason in the first trimester (or took even more liberal views), while 54 percent believed that abortion should be allowed, at most, in cases of rape, incest, or threats to the mother's life.

The idea of a "pro-choice majority" comes from a partial and tendentious reading of public opinion. Pollsters usually find strong support for *Roe* v. *Wade*, for example, but a lot of voters seem to think, incorrectly, that to overturn *Roe* would prohibit abortion with no exceptions. The actual policy regime imposed by *Roe* (leaving abortion effectively legal at any stage of pregnancy) consistently draws support from only about 10 percent of the population.

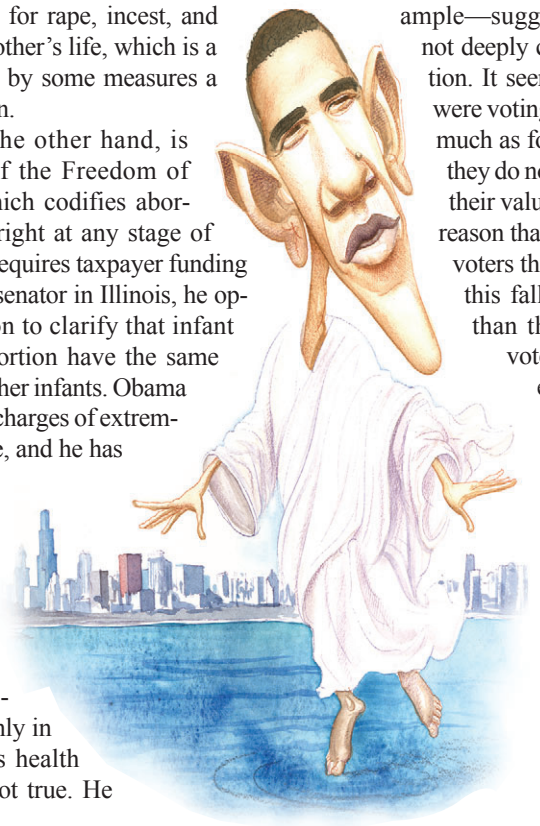
There's too much public ambivalence and hesitation for it to be wise to say that there is a pro-life majority. But it is pretty clear that McCain is closer to the policy preferences of the median voter than Obama is. Yes, McCain wants to overturn *Roe*, which is unpopular. But he wants to move slowly toward a ban on abortion with exceptions for rape, incest, and threats to the mother's life, which is a mainstream and by some measures a majority position.

Obama, on the other hand, is a co-sponsor of the Freedom of Choice Act, which codifies abortion as a legal right at any stage of pregnancy and requires taxpayer funding of it. As a state senator in Illinois, he opposed legislation to clarify that infant survivors of abortion have the same legal rights as other infants. Obama is vulnerable to charges of extremism on this issue, and he has misstated the facts in ways that make him look more moderate.

He has suggested that the law allows late-term abortion only in cases of serious health issues. That's not true. He has said as well that he opposed the infant-protection bill because it threatened *Roe*—it didn't—and that he would have supported it if it had included language making clear that it did not affect the legality of abortion. Actually, the bill had exactly that language at one point, and Obama still opposed it. McCain may not like talking about abortion, but Obama has better reasons to avoid it.

Over the last few months, there has been a lot of speculation about whether McCain could appeal to the voters who backed Hillary Clinton during the Democratic primaries. Courting these voters is sometimes held to require McCain to downplay his position on abortion. But that assumption is based on a flawed analysis of Clinton's vote. The Democrats who are most disappointed by Clinton's loss are pro-choice feminists, and most of them are going to end up supporting Obama.

But the working-class white and Hispanic voters who started voting for Clinton during the primaries—they're another story. The pollsters did not ask Democratic primary voters where they stood on abortion, because reporters are more interested in Republicans' divisions on the issue. Still, all the demographic information we have about those voters—their income and educational levels, for example—suggests that they are not deeply committed to abortion. It seems likely that they were voting against Obama as much as for Clinton, and that they do not trust him to share their values. And it stands to reason that the working-class voters that McCain can win this fall are more pro-life than the subset of those voters who participated in the Democratic primaries.



ROMAN GENN

The geography of this year's race makes Obama's position on abortion an even bigger liability. The swing states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Missouri are all more pro-life than the nation as a whole, according to SurveyUSA.

Recent electoral history also counsels McCain to elevate the abortion issue. There has been a lot of debate about the impact of referenda against same-sex marriage in the 2004 election, but what cannot seriously be debated is that the social issues were key to Bush's reelection. A third of the voters were mainly concerned about Iraq and the War on Terror: Bush won three-fifths of them. A slightly larger group were primarily concerned about economic issues, and Bush lost three-quarters of them. Another 22 percent of the voters based their decision on "moral values," and 80 percent of them backed Bush. In an election confined to foreign policy and economics, Bush would have lost.

The Republicans largely took social issues off the table in the 2006 election. Socially conservative but economically statist voters were given no reason to pause before voting Democratic. That wasn't the only reason Republicans got creamed in that election, but it was one of them.

McCain has two other reasons to raise the abortion issue, both related to the way Obama is campaigning. Obama is trying to woo evangelical voters more than any Democrat since Jimmy Carter. The more Obama becomes associated with pro-abortion extremism, the less success that strategy will have. Obama is also portraying himself as a man who will transcend our old divisions. But on the most divisive issue of all, Obama is more partisan than peacemaker.

The pro-abortion lobby that currently styles itself "NARAL Pro-Choice America" recently commissioned a survey purporting to demonstrate that the more voters find out about McCain's anti-abortion record, the less they will like him. Some reporters bought it. Actually, all the poll demonstrated is that pro-choice voters are likely to turn against McCain if they are misinformed that he opposes abortion even to save a woman's life. Nobody has, to my knowledge, polled pro-life voters on whether they would be less willing to support Obama after finding out that he supports taxpayer funding of abortion and late-term abortions—which are, unlike the NARAL poll's assertions, true statements. Perhaps the McCain campaign should commission one. **NR**

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Quota Quest

Of Obama's vulnerability on racial preferences

JOHN J. MILLER

The election of Barack Obama threatens to become the worst thing that ever happened to race-based affirmative action. So says liberal columnist Bonnie Erbe. "What could do more damage to the argument that African Americans deserve racial preferences than a majority of Americans voting to put an African American in the White House?" she asked in July. Her answer: "Little, from where I sit."

The case for racial preferences almost certainly would weaken during an Obama presidency. Sanctimonious liberals everywhere would face a squirm-inducing question: "If racism in America is so bad, then how come . . . ?" The smart ones will observe that most whites actually cast their votes for John McCain (as seems likely, based on current polls). Even so, Obama's success would force the conversation about racial preferences to shift fundamentally.

To a certain extent, it already has. On the night of January 26, after Obama won South Carolina's Democratic primary, supporters at a victory party broke into a chant: "Race doesn't matter! Race doesn't matter!" The mood was so jubilant that even a veteran race hustler like Rev. Jeremiah Wright would have been tempted to join in.

Yet the case for racial preferences and their ongoing reality are separate things. Obama may inspire all kinds of happy talk about national healing. (If you think the media are already treating him as a post-racial messiah, just wait until his inauguration day.) At the same time, his administration would strive to make sure that racial bean-counting shaped voting districts, college admissions, K–12 demographics, public contracting, and business hiring.

Personnel is policy, and Obama almost certainly would nominate judges and appoint civil-rights officials from the ranks of activist organizations whose very purpose is to push the idea that race matters, contrary to what those South Carolina chanters had the audacity to hope. Just translate the name of a leading Hispanic group, the National Council of La Raza: In complete English, it's the National Council of *the Race*.

Obama isn't special in this regard. Nearly any Democrat in the White House would draw from the same pool of people and advance the same color-coded causes. Raul Yzaguirre, who served as president of the National Council of the Race for three decades, was a co-chairman of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

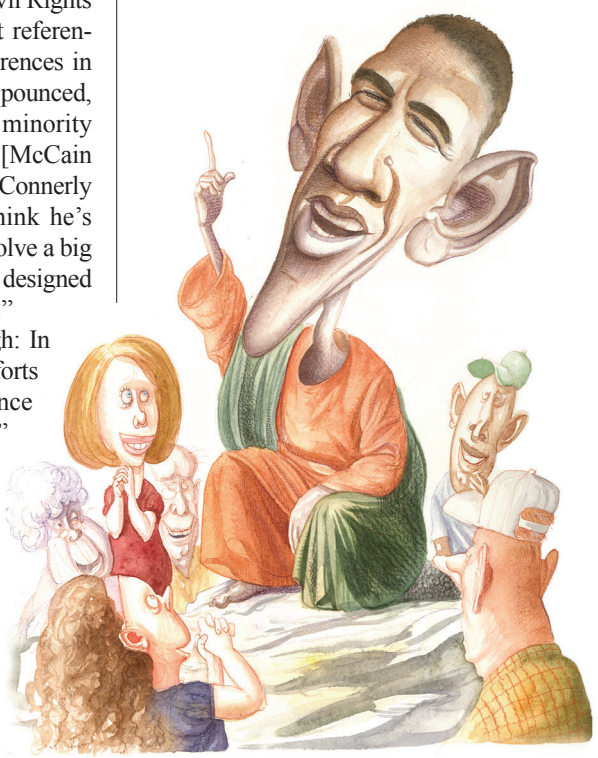
Some foes of racial preferences nevertheless have felt the urge to cheer on Obama, in the belief that his success represents at least a symbolic victory for colorblindness. Ward Connerly is both a Republican and America's best-known foe of racial preferences. In February, he sent a $500 donation to Obama. "My token contribution wasn't an endorsement," says Connerly, who supported Rudy Giuliani in the GOP primaries and now plans to vote for McCain. "But I wanted to applaud his efforts to take America beyond race."

Although Obama's campaign cashed Connerly's check, the Democrat has refused to pay back any respects. In fact, he's done quite the opposite. On July 27, McCain endorsed the Arizona Civil Rights Initiative—a Connerly-led ballot referendum that would ban racial preferences in the state. Later that day, Obama pounced, in remarks at a conference of minority journalists: "I think in the past [McCain had] been opposed to these Ward Connerly initiatives as divisive. And I think he's right. These are not designed to solve a big problem, but they're all too often designed to drive a wedge between people."

The first point was fair enough: In the past, McCain has blasted efforts to ban racial preferences. He once even labeled them "divisive." McCain doesn't like to admit changing his mind, but apparently he has—in a direction that's both more conservative and more in keeping with public sentiment. Connerly's initiatives, after all, have passed in the Democrat-leaning states of California, Michigan, and Washington. In November, they're likely to appear on ballots in Arizona, Colorado, and Nebraska. No wonder Obama sees them as divisive: They set him apart from the views of most Americans, at a time when he's trying to become broadly acceptable.

Obama has a long history of backing racial preferences. As a state senator in Illinois, he called them "absolutely necessary." Nothing changed when he moved to Washington. The man who recently spoke in Berlin about the need to tear down "the walls between races and tribes" has supported a bill that would recognize ethnic Hawaiians as a federal tribe with a series of race-based privileges. Two years ago, Obama recorded a radio ad in which he urged Michigan voters to rally against Proposal 2, the Connerly initiative: "It would wipe out programs that help women and minorities get a good education and jobs. . . . It moves us further away from a country of full opportunity."

As a presidential candidate, Obama has tried to sound more conciliatory. When the topic of racial preferences comes up, he says he's against quotas—politicians always say they're against quotas—and suggests considering class-based preferences. "We have to think about affirmative action and craft it in such a way where some of our children who are advantaged aren't getting more favorable treatment



ROMAN GENN

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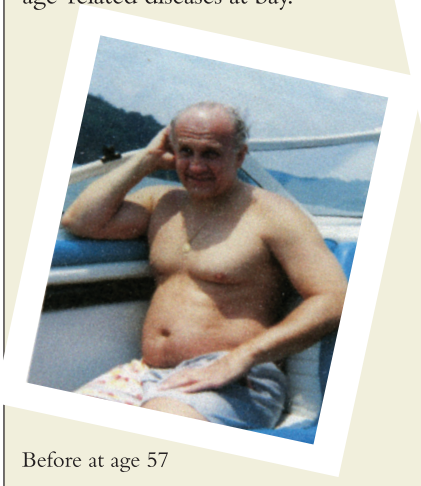
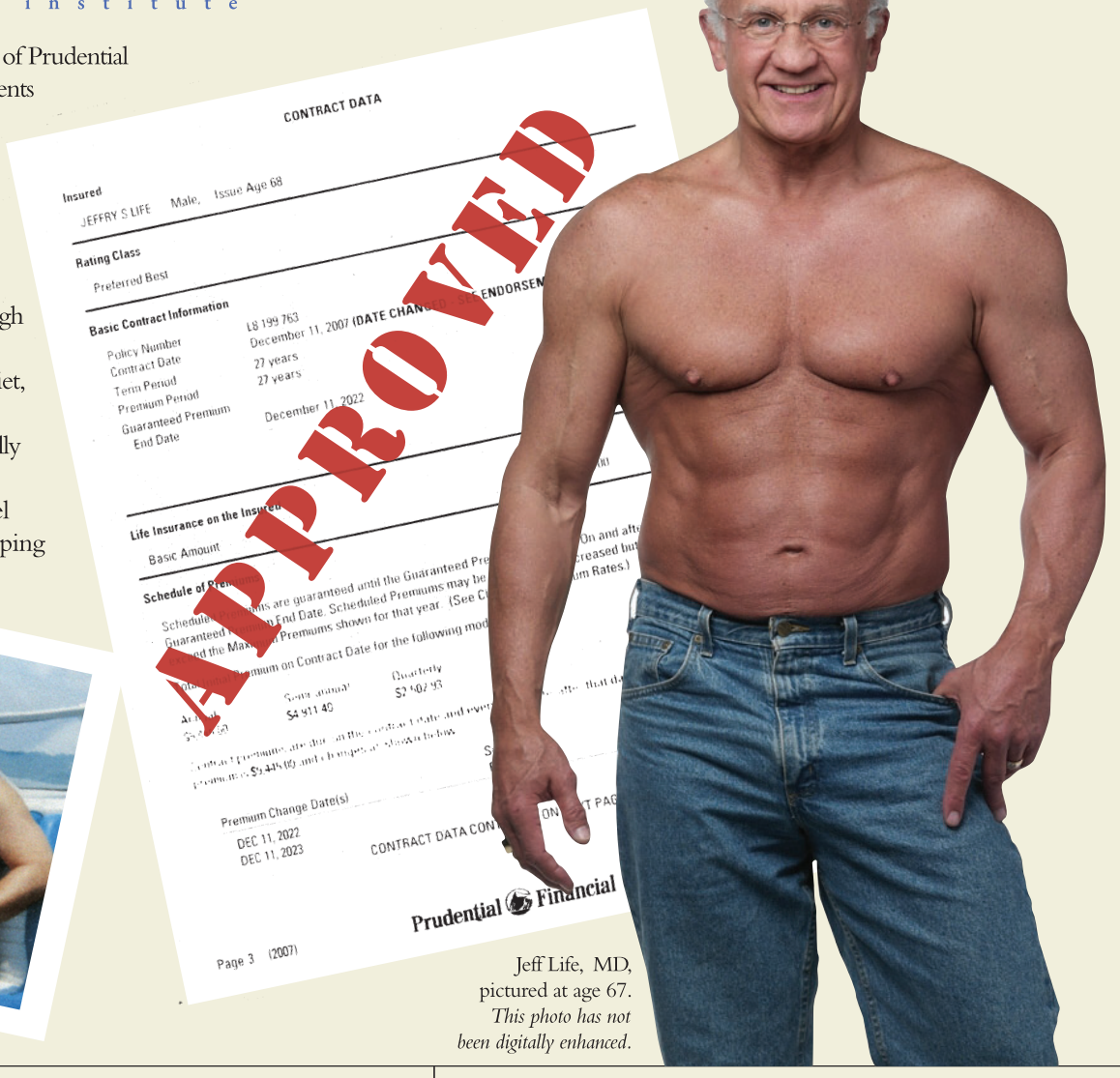


Before at age 57



Jeff Life, MD, pictured at age 67. *This photo has not been digitally enhanced.*

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than a poor white kid who has struggled more," he said in July. But make no mistake: Obama would not supplant racial preferences with socioeconomic ones. Instead, he might supplement them, further chipping away at the notion that merit ought to outweigh all else when awarding anything from public-university slots to federal highway contracts.

Last year on ABC News, Obama spoke on a personal level: "I think that my daughters should probably be treated by any admissions officer as folks who are pretty advantaged." He likes this line well enough to have repeated it since. Yet the reality of racial preferences in college enrollments is that they promote those minority applicants who should need the least amount of uplift. In their 1998 book *The Shape of the River*, William G. Bowen and Derek Bok reported that 86 percent of black students admitted to selective colleges come from either middle-class or upper-class backgrounds. What's more, Theodore O'Neill, the undergraduate-admissions director at Obama's former employer (the University of Chicago), told the *Wall Street Journal* that he simply doesn't care. He heard the candidate's request and said that he would still give the Obama girls "a break." For all of Obama's reasonable rhetoric, it appears that little would change in practice.

Racial preferences aren't a voting issue for most people. Yet race has found a few unexpected perches in the election. Hillary Clinton took a great deal of flak when she equated the civil-rights contributions of LBJ and MLK. When the McCain campaign aired a commercial that likened Obama's celebrity status to that of Paris Hilton, it faced charges of race-baiting. A couple of times, Obama has introduced the topic deliberately, such as when he predicted what those nasty Republicans would say of him: "He doesn't look like all those other presidents on those dollar bills" (i.e., he isn't a white guy).

Much will ride on how deftly McCain handles the inevitable eruptions of the race issue between now and November. But he shouldn't shy away from raising the question of racial preferences. He's moving to the side of colorblindness, and represents the broad American mainstream while his opponent sticks with outworn policies that most voters reject. McCain is on the winning side of this one. He should act like it. **NR**

Meandering Toward Disaster

The perils of making a left-wing ideologue commander-in-chief

ANDREW C. McCARTHY

On the War on Terror, as with most issues, it can be difficult to understand Barack Obama's thinking if you listen only to his finely wrought speeches. But if you take the time to watch as Obama meanders toward a position, understanding him is easy.

Case in point: the Supreme Court's abysmal *Boumediene* decision in June, extending the constitutional right of habeas corpus (the right to have one's detention reviewed by a court) to alien enemy combatants held by the military at Guantanamo Bay. Obama was heartened by the ruling. As is his wont upon straying from the TelePrompTer, he dug himself a hole, this time in the form of an impromptu paean to pre-9/11 days, when terrorism was managed as though it were a garden-variety law-enforcement matter. "What we know," he proclaimed on June 16, "is that, in previous terrorist attacks—for example, the first attack against the World Trade Center—we were able to arrest those responsible, put them on trial. They are currently in U.S. prisons, incapacitated."

What we actually know is that everything Obama said was wrong.

We were not able to arrest all of those responsible even for the 1993 WTC bombing—one of the plotters escaped and was harbored for a decade by Saddam Hussein's Iraq (you remember, the place where Obama says there were no terrorists until the U.S. invasion). Of the two dozen terrorists indicted for al-Qaeda's 1998 American-embassy bombings, which killed more than 200 people, only five have been prosecuted. That number does not include Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, a Qaeda founder who was not tried for his role in the attacks because he exploited the relatively weak security of the civilian criminal-justice system to attempt an escape during a meeting with his lawyers, maiming a prison guard in the process; he was consequently sentenced to 32 years in prison for attempted murder. The Clinton administration did not even bother to file indictments for the attacks on Khobar Towers (19 U.S. airmen killed) and the USS *Cole* (17 U.S. sailors killed). And the fugitive Osama bin Laden was not exactly incapacitated by his grand-jury indictment in June 1998—he orchestrated the embassy bombings, the *Cole* bombing, and 9/11 from Afghanistan, where the FBI has not had much success executing arrest warrants.

The McCain camp pounced on Obama's gaffe, sending him into his familiar backpedal dance. As usual, Obama argued that the real problem was that Republican fear-mongers and benighted commentators were failing to grasp the elegant nuance of his thinking. (After all, he has taught constitutional law in an elite law school!) Obama said he had simply praised the pre-9/11 enforcement strategy and gone on to fault Bush for abandoning it. Why on earth would anyone think he was *endorsing* what he had praised? Obama insisted he had merely meant "that we can abide by due process and abide by basic concepts of rule of law and still crack down on terrorists." Meaning . . . what? Civilian trials for everyone? Obama wouldn't say, but he wanted at least habeas corpus for everyone: "The question is whether or not, as the Supreme Court said, people who are being held have a chance to at least suggest that 'Hey, you've got the wrong guy,' or 'I shouldn't be here.' It's not a question about whether or not they're free." Got that?

Richard Clarke thought he had it. The former Clinton counterterrorism czar and Obama adviser told ABC News that even Osama bin Laden should have the habeas corpus "right to go to federal court and ask the government to release him." Clarke's assessment was not only in sync with Obama's Delphic circumlocutions but was also an entirely accurate statement of what *Boumediene*

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holds. And that is precisely the problem: Obama's script calls for him to favor the Supreme Court's ruling, which is wildly popular with the Left, but to do so only by dilating on "due process" and "the rule of law"—lest the fog lift and voters grasp that Obama's idea of "cracking down on terrorists" includes conferring American civil rights upon Osama bin Laden.

That is why, in a press gaggle on June 18, Obama declined to "speculate" on how, if president, he would handle bin Laden, were al-Qaeda's emir to be captured. Gone, though, was the candidate's enthusiasm for trials in the criminal-justice system, which had been in evidence just two days before. The important things, Obama now stressed, were that bin Laden not be turned into a "martyr," and that he be handled "in a way that allows the entire world to understand the murderous acts that he's engaged in." Given that bin Laden himself has both declared war on the United States and claimed credit for sundry mass-murder attacks, one wonders what exactly it is that Obama thinks "the entire world" is in the dark about.

Having dealt with that question, Obama floated another trial balloon: an international tribunal on the Nuremberg model. "One of the hallmarks, one of the high-water points, I think, of U.S. foreign policy," said he, "was the Nuremberg trials. Because the world had not seen before victors behave in ways that advanced a set of universal principles. And that set a tone for post-war reconstruction and creation of an international order that I think was extraordinarily important." But what were these universal principles? At Nuremberg, there was no appellate process, no habeas corpus, and no access to American civilian courts to say, "Hey, you've got the wrong guy." For several of the defendants, the tribunals were followed in short order by a date with the business end of a noose.

In contrast, the military commissions ordered by President Bush and authorized by Congress provide lavish procedural protections for enemy combatants charged with war crimes: In addition to taxpayer-funded counsel, the presumption of innocence, the ability to call witnesses and introduce evidence, sentencing protocols, and the like, the law prescribes military appeals and adds systematic access to the civilian justice system for review by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals and, finally, the Supreme Court. To note that the World War II tribunals did not come close to this quantum of due process would be gross understatement. Yet Obama, admirer of a Nuremberg process whose authors would not for a moment have brooked such a breathtaking judicial excess as *Boumediene*, staunchly opposed the Military Commissions Act.

When Obama does take an unwavering position, it is to weaken executive war powers. Most of the time, though, he shifts incrementally from this default setting, nudged by the calculation of the moment. His dizzying three-day metamorphosis from Clinton-style enforcement to habeas corpus to Nuremberg is not singular. In early 2006, he opposed reauthorization of the Patriot Act (passed in 2001, before he was in the Senate) because it gave government "powers it didn't need to invade our privacy without cause or suspicion." But when opposition became politically untenable, he got on board—protesting that intervening civil liberties "improvements" justified his switch.

While neck-and-neck with Hillary Clinton in the later primaries, Obama planted himself firmly in the fringe, opposing a surveillance-reform bill that had garnered overwhelming bipartisan support in the Democrat-controlled Congress. The reform was desperately needed to reverse a court ruling that had imperiled the CIA and NSA's authority to gather intelligence abroad. Sensible Democrats understood that they could not afford to block intelligence collection and vest al-Qaeda with Fourth Amendment rights. But the bill was at odds with a hard-Left cause célèbre: denying legal immunity to the telecommunications companies that assisted the Bush administration's post-9/11 monitoring of cross-border communications. Obama not only voted with the fringe, he promised to filibuster any immunity bill. But by the time the final vote came up in July, he had the nomination sewn up. *Filibuster? Surely you jest.* As flip follows flop, he voted yea—immunity and all.

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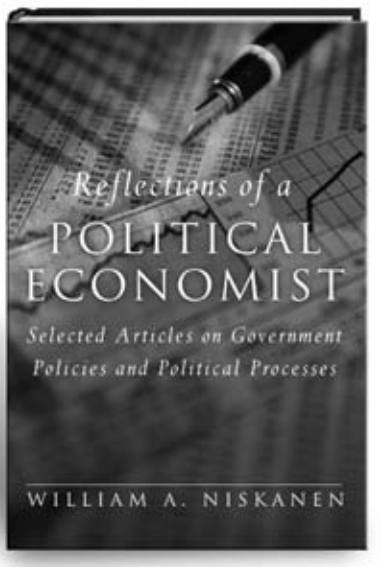
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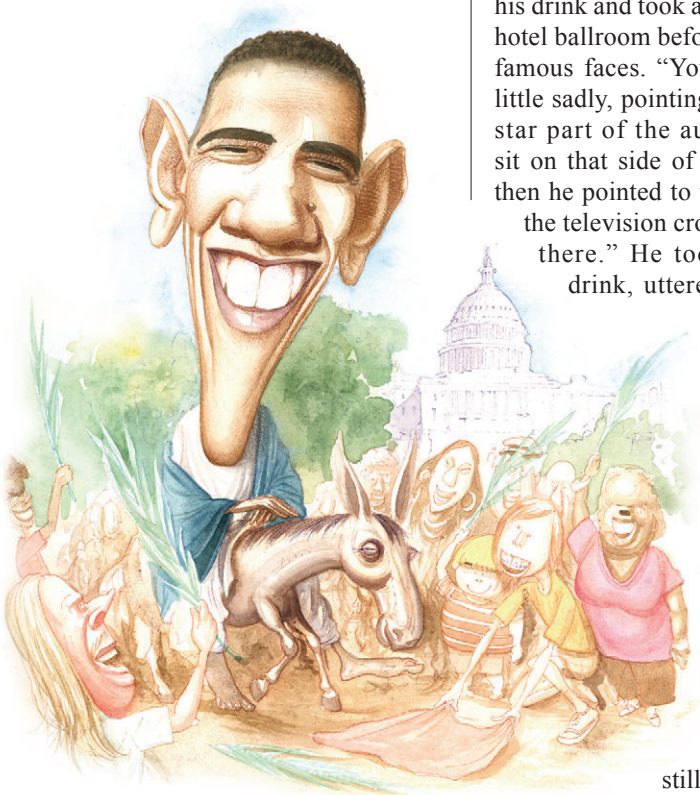
At bottom, Obama is a calculating left-wing ideologue, and that is how he would govern when it comes to the war—and much else. His unvarying first instinct is that the pursuit of America's interests overseas, especially their pursuit by the use of military force, is imperial and provocative. That pursuit, and not fundamentalist Islam's propensity to spawn violent radicalism, is for him the real threat. At home, Obama sees sensible measures to protect the country from attack as violations of civil liberties and a slippery slope to "profiling"—a revealing reminder of the race-conscious, criminal-friendly activism that marked Obama's years as a Chicago "community organizer" and an Illinois legislator.

Though often surprisingly uninformed, Obama is shrewd, so he is willing to soft-pedal and even abandon his principles to court voters who do not share them. But even if Obama must deflect attention from those principles, he is constantly pursuing them, in Fabian fashion and under the guise of such euphemisms as "social justice," "due process," "rule of law," and, of course, "America's reputation in the world."

On the war, an Obama administration would give Americans more than our reputation to worry about. **NR**



Not Ready for Prime Time

When you act too cool to be president . . .

ROB LONG

HERE'S what I'd say to Barack Obama if he called me for campaign advice (I'm not holding my breath): If you find yourself, for some reason, at the annual awards show put on by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association—otherwise known as the Golden Globes—bear in mind that it's a cash bar.

Wine is served at the tables, of course, but if you want a serious drink you have to head to the back of the auditorium and line up with the rest of Hollywood. One year, I found myself in line with one of the biggest movie stars—maybe the biggest movie star—of the 1970s. That year, though, he was starring in a television show, a comedy. We got to chatting, and as he collected his drink and took a sip, he surveyed the hotel ballroom before us, thronged with famous faces. "You know," he said, a little sadly, pointing over to the movie-star part of the audience, "I used to sit on that side of the ballroom." And then he pointed to the opposite side, to the television crowd. "Now I sit over there." He took a belt from his drink, uttered a single colorful expletive, and moved off.

It's a precarious business, maintaining movie stardom. Make a few wrong moves, appear in a few bad pictures, and you start to slide down the greased ladder until you find yourself on a television show. You're still famous. You're still a star. But the difference between a movie star and a television star is the difference between a croissant and a Croissan'Wich. One is sophisticated and foreign and rich, and a little exotic. The other you can get at a drive-thru.

Barack Obama, who over the past year effortlessly catapulted himself into superstar orbit as the winning, coolly remote leading man in *The Barack Obama Story*, is slowly and awkwardly adjusting to his Croissan'Wich status. After his pre-victory lap through Europe and the Middle East, Obama has returned home to lackluster poll numbers and lost momentum. His primary-winning act—the big venues, the cheering crowds, the electric rhetoric—was all about distance. He'd appear just above the crowd, just out of reach. While other candidates were gobbling pulled-pork sandwiches and grabbing hands—begging and needy, and as instantly accessible as television stars—Obama glided along like a movie star: untouchable, unflappable, and unreachable. He was all about the big screen; his opponents—especially Hillary Clinton—were small-screen: warty and awkward and up-close. He was a croissant. They were a sack of Croissan'Wiches.

Trouble is, America sort of prefers the everyday accessibility of the Croissan'Wich. We get tired of the fancy and the complicated. There's something exhausting about the entire Obama Experience—the fever pitch of the press corps love-ins, the huge arena speeches—and now that both candidates are getting their unflattering close-ups as the campaign moves into its small-screen phase, the thunder and lightning of the Obama machine seems a little overwrought. The last thing a candidate needs as he makes the inevitable and necessary swerve to the center—adjusting his positions, as Obama has done, on offshore drilling, terrorist surveillance, taxes, and foreign policy—is a lot of fanfare. It's best not to have a swelling orchestra behind a montage of expedient flip-flops.

The chief benefit of being a television star is that you can be slightly fatter, slightly uglier, and slightly older than a movie star. The small screen is a lot more forgiving. A television star's relationship

ROMAN GENN

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with the audience is casual and familiar—he appears in their living rooms on a weekly (or even daily) basis. To see a movie star, on the other hand, you have to hire a babysitter and drive over to the multiplex.

It's tough going from the big screen to the small, as my Golden Globes drinking companion understood. Obama seems to be making a bumpy transition, too. He's selected a cinematic, open-air venue for his convention address, which suggests that the demands of the fall campaign—a lot of retail, small-bore, incremental sorties into specific swing states where the Croissan'Wich is a lot more popular than the croissant—are going to be much more challenging for him than many of us probably expected.

The American presidency, circa 2008, is strictly small-screen.

And the language! All of that pompous, final-scene oratory—the seas receding and the "We are the ones we've been waiting for!" nonsense—really works only when you've got a syrupy soundtrack stealing in and the camera rising up for an emotional crane shot. But as in American television, there is no final act in American politics, no fade out. It just keeps going, repeating itself through the week. You get on the plane, fly to a sad little place somewhere in America, shake some hands, eat some pie, get back on the plane, do it all over again. It's episodic, which is why the really successful politicians of the past few years—Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton—had an accessible, easygoing, television-star quality. Reagan, of course, had made the transition from big screen to small in the 1950s when his movie career petered out. And Bill Clinton? In a parallel life, he would have made a legendary television weatherman.

I know what Obama's thinking: He's thinking that if he can just skate through the small-screen phase of the campaign—the *tacky* phase, let's be honest—he'll make it to the White House, where he can go back to the kind of big-screen roles he prefers. He's thinking that the pundits and the cliché-bound historians are correct, that the presidency is a "bully pulpit," and that it's about galvanizing the public with inspiring rhetoric.

But the American presidency, circa 2008, is strictly small-screen. Hemmed in by finances and politics and the healthy American mistrust of government-led change, the president maneuvers in baby steps and tiny increments. At its best, it's a four-year television series with an option to renew.

Boy, is Obama in for a letdown. **NR**

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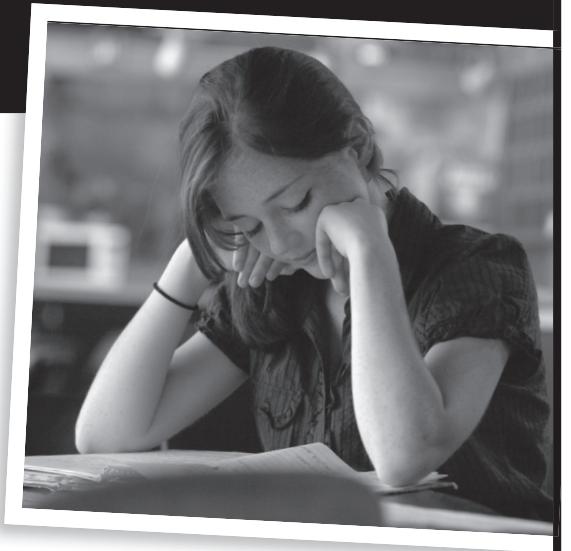

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Senator Stealth

How to advance radical causes when no one's looking

STANLEY KURTZ

After hearing about Barack Obama's ties to the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Fr. Michael Pfleger, and the militant activists of ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), it should be clear to everyone that his extremist roots run deep. But the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee has yet another connection with the world of far-Left radicalism. Obama has long been linked—through foundation grants, shared political activism, collaboration on legislation and tactics, and mutual praise and support—with the Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation, one of the least known yet most influential national umbrella groups for church-based "community organizers."

The same separatist, anti-American theology of liberation that was so boldly and bitterly proclaimed by Obama's pastor is shared, if more quietly, by Obama's Gamaliel colleagues. The operative word here is "quietly." Gamaliel specializes in ideological stealth, and Obama, a master student of Gamaliel strategy, shows disturbing signs of being a sub rosa radical himself. Obama's legislative tactics, as well as his persistent professions of non-ideological pragmatism, appear to be inspired by his radical mentors' most sophisticated tactics. Not only has Obama studied, taught, and apparently absorbed stealth techniques from radical groups like Gamaliel and ACORN, but in his position as a board member of Chicago's supposedly nonpartisan Woods Fund, he quietly funneled money to his radical allies—at the very moment he most needed their support to boost his political career. It's high time for these shadowy, perhaps improper, ties to receive a dose of sunlight.

The connections are numerous. Gregory Galluzzo, Gamaliel's co-founder and executive director, served as a trainer and mentor during Obama's mid-1980s organizing days in Chicago. The Developing Communities Project, which first hired Obama, is part of the Gamaliel network. Obama became a consultant and eventually a trainer of community organizers for Gamaliel. (He also served as a trainer for ACORN.) And he has kept up his ties with Gamaliel during his time in the U.S. Senate.

The Gamaliel connection appears to supply a solution to the riddle of Obama's mysterious political persona. On one hand, he likes to highlight his days as a community organizer—a profession with proudly radical roots in the teachings of Chicago's Saul Alinsky, author of the highly influential text *Rules for Radicals*. Obama even goes so far as to make the community-organizer image a metaphor for his distinctive conception of elective office. On the other hand, Obama presents himself as a post-ideological, consensus-minded politician who favors pragmatic, common-sense solutions to the issues of the day. How can Obama be radical and post-radical at the same time? Perhaps by deploying Gamaliel techniques. Gamaliel organizers have discovered a way to fuse their Left-extremist political

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beliefs with a smooth, non-ideological surface of down-to-earth pragmatism: the substance of Jeremiah Wright with the appearance of Norman Vincent Peale. Could this be Obama's secret?

FROM REVELATION TO REVOLUTION

Before outlining Gamaliel's techniques of political stealth, we need to identify the views that they are camouflaging. These can be found in Dennis Jacobsen's book *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing*. Jacobsen is the pastor of Incarnation Lutheran Church in Milwaukee and director of the Gamaliel National Clergy Caucus. Jacobsen's book, which is part of the first-year reading list for new Gamaliel organizers, lays out the underlying theology of Gamaliel's activities. While Jacobsen's book was published in 2001, it is based on presentations Jacobsen has been making at Gamaliel's clergy-training center since 1992 and clearly has Galluzzo's endorsement. So while we cannot be sure that Obama has read or taught *Doing Justice*, the book certainly embodies a political perspective to which Obama's more than 20 years of friendship with Galluzzo, and his stint as a Gamaliel instructor, would surely have exposed him.

In Jacobsen's conception, America is a sinful and fallen nation whose pervasive classism, racism, and militarism authentic Christians must constantly resist. Drawing on the Book of Revelation, Jacobsen exhorts, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! . . . Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins." The United States, Jacobsen maintains, employs nationalism, propaganda, racism, bogus "civil religion," and class enmity to bolster its entrenched and oppressive corporate system. Authentic Christians forced to live in such a nation can "come out of Babylon," says Jacobsen, only by entering into "a perpetual state of internal exile."

Of course, many believers do feel at home in the United States, but according to Jacobsen, these inauthentic and misguided Christians have been lulled into the false belief that the United States is somehow different from other countries—that it stands as a genuine defender of freedom and democracy. According to Jacobsen, the desire of most Americans to create a safe, secure life for themselves and their families constitutes an unacceptable emotional distancing from the sufferings of the urban poor. Jacobsen says that whenever he feels himself seduced by the American dream of personal security—this "unconscionable removal from the lives of those who suffer"—he rejects its pull as the deplorable "encroachment of America on my soul." To "feel at home in the United States," maintains Jacobsen, is not only to fall victim to a scarcely disguised form of political despotism; it is to betray Christianity itself.

Although Jacobsen acknowledges that the sufferings of the poor in America do not quite rise to the level of the Nazi Holocaust, he nonetheless finds a similarity: "The accommodation and silence of the church amidst Nazi atrocities are paralleled by the accommodation and silence of the church in this country amidst a calculated war against the poor." He recounts being present at the Pentagon "to fast and vigil with a group of religious resisters against the madness of nuclear build-up and militarism generated in that place" and is horrified when he sees that many in the American military actually think of themselves as Christians. For Jacobsen, this means that the church has "aligned itself with oppressive forces and crucified its Lord anew."

Jacobsen has a low opinion of the food pantries, homeless shelters, and walk-a-thons that make up so much religious charitable activity in the United States. All that charity, says Jacobsen, tends to suppress the truth that the system itself is designed to benefit the prosperous and keep the poor down. He complains: "The Christians who are so generous with food baskets at Thanksgiving or with presents for the poor at Christmas often vote into office politicians whose policies ignore or crush those living in poverty." "Most churches do not operate on the basis of healthy agitation," he says, but instead "on the basis of manipulation, authoritarianism, or guilt-tripping."

Obama's ongoing political strategy and persona appear to borrow liberally from the distinctive methods of several radical activist groups, especially Gamaliel and ACORN.

The solution, says Jacobsen, is community organizing: "Metropolitan organizing offers a chance to end the warfare against the poor and to heal the divisions of class and race that separate this sick society." "Militant mass action . . . fueled by righteous anger," he maintains, offers authentic community, and therefore "the possibility of fulfillment in a vacuous society." He continues: "If the pain and human degradation all around us doesn't stir up within us sufficient anger to want to shake the foundations of this society, then it's probably best for us to go back to playing church."

Other than the sense of community that is generated by militant struggle, what does Jacobsen offer as the cure for America's ills? He is short on detail here, but there are tantalizing hints. Jacobsen invokes the communal property and absence of private ownership that prevailed among early Christians as a possible model. Despite his initial skepticism regarding such selflessness, says Jacobsen, he has seen this sort of "radical sharing of limited resources" on a trip to a poor African church in Tanzania. Unfortunately, says Jacobsen, "the church in the United States lacks community. The American church by and large is privatistic, insular, and individualistic. It reflects American culture."

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These, then, are the beliefs at the spiritual heart of the Gamaliel Foundation's community-organizing efforts. They show clear echoes of Jeremiah Wright's and James Cone's black-liberation theology, and it's evident that Obama has an affinity for organizations that embody this point of view. But a question arises. Gamaliel's goal is to build church-based coalitions capable of wielding power on behalf of the poor. These congregation-based organizations are supposed to counterbalance and undercut America's oppressive power structures. Yet if most American Christians are deluded servants of a sinful and oppressive system, how can they be molded into a majority coalition for change? Given the privatistic, insular, and individualistic character of American culture, theological frankness might backfire and drive away potential allies, exactly as happened with Reverend Wright. Thus arises the need for stealth.

FAKE RIGHT, GO LEFT

It might have been all but impossible to penetrate the strategic thinking of Obama's cohorts if not for the fortuitous 2008 publication of *Organizing Urban America: Secular and Faith-based Progressive Movements*, by Rutgers political scientist Heidi Swarts. This is the first book-length study of the organizing tactics and political ideologies of Gamaliel and ACORN, the two groups to which Obama's community-organizing ties are closest. Swarts's study focuses on Gamaliel and ACORN in St. Louis, but given the degree of national coordination by both groups, the carry-over of her findings to Chicago is bound to be substantial. Because Swarts is highly sympathetic to the community-organizing groups she studies, she was granted an unusual degree of access to strategic discussions during her period of fieldwork.

Swarts calls groups like ACORN and (especially) Gamaliel "invisible actors," hidden from public view because they often prefer to downplay their efforts, because they work locally, and because scholars and journalists pay greater attention to movements with national profiles (like the Sierra Club or the Christian Coalition). Congregation-based community organizations like Gamaliel, by contrast, are often invisible even at the local level. A newspaper might report on a demonstration led by a local minister or priest, for example, without noticing that the clergyman in question is part of the Gamaliel network. "Though often hidden from view," says Swarts, "leaders have *intentionally* and *strategically* organized these movements that appear to well up and erupt from below."

Although Gamaliel and ACORN have significantly different tactics and styles, Swarts notes that their political goals and ideologies are broadly similar. Both groups press the state for economic redistribution. The tactics of Gamaliel and ACORN have been shaped in a "post-Alinsky" era of welfare reform and conservative resurgence, posing a severe challenge to those who wish to expand the welfare state. The answer these activists have hit upon, says Swarts, is to work incrementally in urban areas, while deliberately downplaying the far-Left ideology that stands behind their carefully targeted campaigns.

While ACORN's membership is fairly homogeneous, consisting chiefly of inner-city blacks and Hispanics, congregation-based community organizations like the Gamaliel Foundation tend to have more racially, culturally, and politically mixed constituencies. The need to overcome these divisions and gather a broad coalition behind its hard-Left agenda has pushed Gamaliel to develop what Swarts calls an "innovative cultural strategy." Because of the suspicions that blue-collar members might harbor toward its elite, liberal leaders, Gamaliel's main "ideological tactic," says Swarts, is to present its organizers as the opposite of radical, elite, or ideological. As Swarts explains, they deliberately refrain from using leftist jargon like "racism," "sexism," "classism," "homophobia," "oppression," or "multiple oppressions" in front of ordinary members —even though, amongst themselves, Gamaliel's organizers toss around this sort of lingo with abandon, just as Jacobsen does in his book.

Swarts supplies a chart listing "common working-class perceptions of liberal social movements" on one side, while displaying on the other side Gamaliel organizers' tricky tactics for getting around them. To avoid seeming like radicals or "hippies left over from the sixties," Gamaliel organizers are careful to wear conventional clothing and conduct themselves with dignity, even formality. Since liberal social movements tend to come off as naïve and idealistic, Gamaliel organizers make a point of presenting their ideas as practical, pragmatic, and down-to-earth. When no one else is listening, Gamaliel organizers may rail at "racism," "sexism," and "oppressive corporate systems," but when speaking to their blue-collar followers, they describe their plans as "common sense solutions for working families."

Although the Gamaliel agenda is deeply collectivist and redistributionist, organizers are schooled to frame their program in traditional American, individualist terms. As Swarts puts it:

> What makes [Gamaliel's] ideology liberal rather than conservative is that it advocates not private or voluntary solutions but collective public programs. They seek action from the state: social welfare programs, redistribution, or regulation. . . . But publicly [Gamaliel and other congregation-based groups] usually emphasize individual responsibility *on the part of authorities*.

What Gamaliel really wants, in other words, is for the public as a whole to fork over funds to the government, but they're careful to frame this demand as a call for "personal responsibility" by particular government officials.

The relative homogeneity of ACORN's membership allows it to display its radicalism more openly. According to Swarts, ACORN members think of themselves as "oppositional outlaws" and "militants unafraid to confront the powers that be." Yet even ACORN has a deeper, hidden ideological dimension. "Long-term ACORN organizers . . . tend to see the organization as a solitary vanguard of principled leftists," says Swarts, while ordinary members rarely think in these overtly ideological terms; for them, it's more about attacking specific problems. In general, ACORN avoids programmatic statements. During a 1980 effort to purge conservatives from its ranks, however, the organization did release a detailed political platform—which Swarts calls "a veritable laundry list of progressive positions."

Although ACORN's radicalism is somewhat more frank than Gamaliel's, ACORN has an "innovative cultural strategy" of its own. ACORN's radicalism is incremental; it's happy to work toward ambitious long-term goals through a series of baby steps. For example, although ACORN has fought for "living

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wage" laws in several American cities, these affect only the small fraction of the workforce employed directly by city governments. The real purpose of ACORN's urban living-wage campaigns, says Swarts, is not economic but political. ACORN's long-term goal is an across-the-board minimum-wage increase at the state and federal levels. The public debate spurred by local campaigns is meant to prepare the political ground for ACORN's more ambitious political goals, and to build up membership in the meantime.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Throughout his career, Obama has drawn on all of these strategies. In Illinois's Republican-controlled state senate, Obama specialized in incremental legislation, often drawn up in collaboration with groups like Gamaliel and ACORN. His tiny, targeted expansions of government-financed health care, for example, were designed to build political momentum for universal health care. And his claim to be a "common-sense pragmatist," rather than a leftist ideologue, comes straight out of the Gamaliel playbook.

Campaign Eternal

THE Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that to everything there is a season. In the world of Barack Obama, the season to govern is fleeting, while the season to campaign stretches on longer than a Russian winter.

By Election Day, Obama will have spent 59 of the preceding 112 months campaigning for higher office. That total excludes any perfunctory campaigning to retain his seat in the Illinois legislature, but includes seven months of a failed bid for Bobby Rush's House seat, an astounding 29 months running for the U.S. Senate, and his current marathon for the presidency. Put another way, Obama spent more of the past decade asking voters to promote him than did any other American—even more than John Edwards, who has invested 48 months in a Senate race and two presidential bids since 1997.

All of that time spent seeking ever-higher offices left Obama with limited time for governing. This may not have seemed all that consequential when Obama was an obscure Democrat ranking low in seniority in a Republican-controlled state legislature. But in politics, things can change quickly: Obama has noted that in Illinois he "passed ten bills in my first six years and 25 in my seventh year." Things like that happen when the president of the Illinois senate, Emil Jones Jr., adopts you as a political godson. But now that Obama is in a position of national influence, governing has taken up even less of his time. After making almost every vote in his first two years in the U.S. Senate, Obama has missed almost half of the votes since January of 2007. GovTrack.US ranks his vote attendance as "exceedingly poor relative to peers."

Month 51

TOM PENNINGTON/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

Obama's 1999–2000 campaign for the House was one of his later starts—which is surprising, since dislodging a four-term incumbent is much tougher than running for an open seat. Perhaps that thumping defeat is what prompted him to take the term "head start" to new extremes when in June 2002 he formed his exploratory committee for a March 2004 U.S. Senate primary. Criticism of Obama's campaigning style at that time is similar to the knock on him today—condescending and too fond of himself. But a year and a half of practice ironed out Obama's worst habits, and he began to hone his endlessly praised oratorical skills.

In the end, Obama needed only to be "good enough" as a candidate: Not one, but two of Obama's rivals experienced unexpected political immolation when the Chicago media developed a sudden and mysterious determination to open sealed divorce records—first Democrat Blair Hull's, then those of Republican Jack Ryan.

Obama's presidential-primary win undoubtedly was a tougher fight than his Senate race. But it still followed that earlier pattern—an astonishingly early start followed by a long stretch of little or no interest, including nine months of mediocre debate performances. Then, as in Illinois, his rival suffered intense press scrutiny at the worst possible time. Hillary Clinton was ripped for an evasive, conflicted answer to a question about drivers' licenses for illegal immigrants. Next, her tale of dodging Bosnian snipers—repeated several times since December—exploded at the end of March, very shortly after the toxic sermons of Jeremiah Wright came to public notice. If the sniper tale hadn't blunted the effects of the Wright controversy, the Democrats might have a different nominee.

That 59 months of campaigning doesn't include any hours spent stumping in 2005 or 2006, even though some of his biggest time commitments those years could easily be mistaken for a presidential campaign. He completed a two-week, 20-city book tour, made dozens of appearances for House and Senate candidates, raised $6 million for the party, spoke to New Hampshire Democrats, and appeared at Sen. Tom Harkin's steak fry in Iowa.

We do not have a deep sense of how a President Obama would govern—because he hasn't governed much at all. One thing is certain, however. If elected, he would begin his 2012 re-election campaign very, very early.

—JIM GERAGHTY

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New evidence now ties Obama still more closely to both organizations. Not only was Obama a trainer for Gamaliel and ACORN, he appears to have used his influence to secure a major increase in funding for both groups—arguably stretching the bounds of propriety in the process.

In 2005, the year after Obama was elected to the U.S. Senate, the Washington, D.C.–based Center for Community Change released a report titled "Promising Practices in Revenue Generation for Community Organizing." One of the report's authors was Jean Rudd, Obama's friend and the president of the Woods Fund during Obama's years on that foundation's board. Buried deep within the report lies the story of Obama's role in expanding the Woods Fund's financial support for groups like Gamaliel and ACORN.

Since the start of his organizing career, Obama was recognized by the Woods Fund as "a great analyst and interpreter of organizing," according to the 2005 report. Initially an adviser, Obama became a Woods Fund board member, and finally board chairman, serving as a key advocate of increased funding for organizing during that period. In 1995, the Woods Fund commissioned a special evaluation of its funding for community organizing—a report that eventually recommended a major expansion of financial support. Obama chaired a committee of organizers that advised the Woods Fund on this important shift.

The committee's report, "Evaluation of the Fund's Community Organizing Grant Program," is based on interviews with all the big names in Obama's personal organizer network. Greg Galluzzo and other Gamaliel Foundation officials were consulted, as were several ACORN organizers, including Madeline Talbott, Obama's key ACORN contact. Talbott, an expert on ACORN's tactics of confrontation and disruption, is quoted more often than any other organizer in the report, sometimes with additional comments from Obama himself. The report holds up Gamaliel and ACORN as models for other groups and supports Talbott's call for "'a massive infusion of resources' to make organizing a truly mass-based movement."

Support from the Woods Fund had importance for these groups that went way beyond the money itself. Since community organizers often use confrontation, intimidation, and "civil disobedience" in the service of their political goals, even liberal foundations sometimes find it difficult to fund them without risking public criticism. As the report puts it: "Some funders . . . are averse to confrontational tactics, and are loathe [*sic*] to support organizing for that reason. They essentially equate organizing with the embarrassment of their business and government associates." The Woods Fund is both highly respected and one of the few foundations to consistently support community organizing, so its money acts as a kind of Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, providing political cover for other foundations

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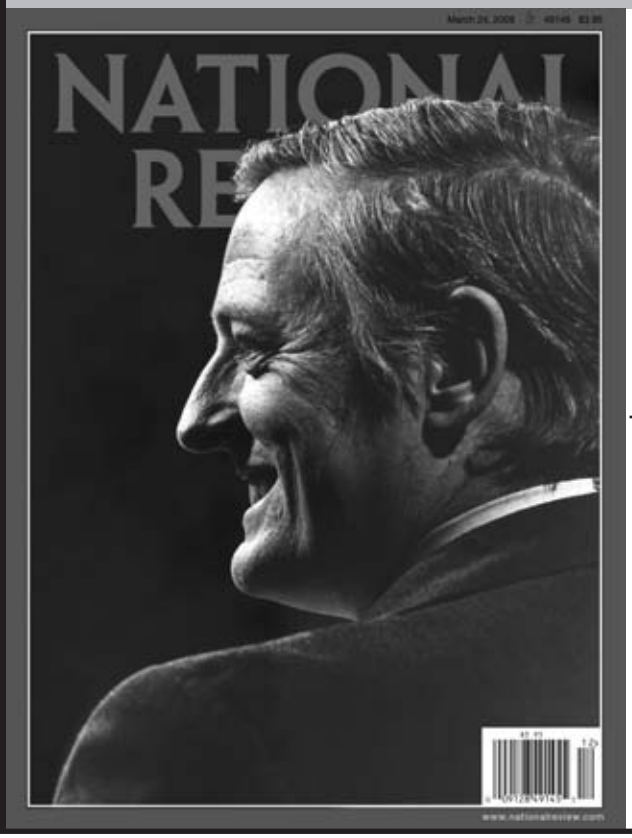

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interested in funding the hard Left. Obama apparently sought to capitalize on this effect, not only by expanding the Woods Fund's involvement in organizing, but by distributing the Woods report to a national network of potential funders.

Formally, the Woods Fund claims to be "non-ideological." According to the report: "This stance has enabled the Trustees to make grants to organizations that use confrontational tactics against the business and government 'establishments,' without undue risk of being criticized for partisanship." Yet ACORN received substantial funding from Woods, apparently aided by Obama's internal advocacy, and we now know that ACORN members have played key roles as volunteer ground troops in Obama's various political campaigns. That would seem to raise the specter of partisanship.

A 2004 article in *Social Policy* by Chicago ACORN leader Toni Foulkes, titled "Case Study: Chicago—The Barack Obama Campaign," explains that, given Obama's long and close relationship to ACORN, "it was natural for many of us to be active volunteers" in Obama's campaigns. Perhaps ACORN volunteers observed the technical legalities and helped Obama merely in their capacity as private citizens. Even so, it seems at least possible that Obama used his position at a supposedly nonpartisan foundation to direct money to an allegedly nonpartisan group, in pursuit of what were in fact nakedly partisan ends.

Given Obama's political aspirations, it's notable that the focus of his Woods Fund report is its call for "improving the tie between organizing and policy making" and shifting organizing's focus from local battles to "citywide or statewide coalitions." The report boldly criticizes Saul Alinsky himself for being excessively focused on local issues, complaining that "he did not seek to fundamentally upset the distribution of power in the wider society."

The ultimate goal of all these efforts—fundamental disruption of America's power structure, and economic redistribution along race, poverty, and gender lines—is entirely compatible with the program outlined by Dennis Jacobsen in *Doing Justice*. Obama could hardly have been unfamiliar with the general drift of Gamaliel ideology, especially given his reputation as an analyst of community organizing and his supervision of a comprehensive review of the field.

Even after becoming a U.S. senator, Obama has maintained his ties to the Gamaliel Foundation. According to an October 2007 report for the University of California by Todd Swanstrom and Brian Banks, "it is almost unheard of for a U.S. Senator to attend a public meeting of a community organization, but Senator Obama attended a Gamaliel affiliate public meeting in Chicago." Given this ongoing contact, given the radicalism of Gamaliel's core ideology, given Obama's close association with Gamaliel's co-founder, Gregory Galluzzo, given Obama's role as a Gamaliel consultant and trainer, and given Obama's outsized role in channeling allegedly "nonpartisan" funding to Gamaliel affiliates (and to his political ground troops at ACORN), some questions are in order. Obama needs to detail the nature of his ties to both Gamaliel and ACORN, and should discuss the extent of his knowledge of Gamaliel's guiding ideology. Ultimately, we need to know if Obama is the post-ideological pragmatist he sometimes claims to be, or in fact a stealth radical. **NR**

Who Is Barack Obama?

His autobiography paints a disturbing picture

MICHAEL GLEDHILL

WHO is Barack Obama? Obama the presidential candidate presents himself as a man who has loved America from his earliest childhood, a man proud of his mixed-race roots who comfortably transcends polarized racial politics, a man who eschews the ideologies of Left and Right, an optimistic healer. But in his critically acclaimed autobiography, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, Obama is something else entirely.

Obama published his autobiography in 1995, when he was in his mid-thirties. Unlike most books by politicians, which are concoctions of clichés penned by ghostwriters, *Dreams* was clearly written by Obama himself. Unlike most politicians, Obama can write and loves language. (He was contemplating a career as a novelist at the time he wrote *Dreams*.) Most important, Obama wrote his autobiography after he had become a political activist but before he was a politician; the book is therefore candid in a way a conventional politician's memoir would never be.

Dreams is a complex, introspective book. Its theme is how Obama, born in Hawaii to a white student mother and Kenyan student father, grows to view himself and the white society around him. The Obama of *Dreams* abandons his multiracial roots to forge an alienated black identity—that of a man steeped in radical ideology who views history in terms of a huge chasm separating oppressor from oppressed, white from black, and rich from poor; a man who is never more emotionally at home than when sitting in the church pew listening to Rev. Jeremiah Wright rant about white racism.

People and politicians change, and the Obama of today may not be the one of 13 years ago. But he has never forsworn *Dreams* or given a detailed explanation of how he has evolved since writing it. The book thus remains an extraordinary window into Obama.

WHAT DOES HE LIKE ABOUT AMERICA?

Candidate Obama claims that "throughout my life, I have always taken my deep and abiding love for this country as a given." He tells us his "heart swells with pride at the sight of our flag."

In *Dreams*, his heart swells at many things but sight of the flag certainly isn't one of them. There he presents a warts-only history of the U.S., a story of evil and suffering. U.S. society is a "racial caste system" where "color and money" determine where you end up in life. He tells us of white children's stoning black children, Jim Crow, and heatless Harlem housing projects. He describes

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"Japanese families interned behind barbed wire; young Russian Jews cutting patterns in Lower East Side sweatshops; dust-bowl farmers loading up their trucks with the remains of shattered lives."

Obama says the Hawaiian islands, where he grew up, are beautiful, but quickly reminds us that behind the beauty lurks the "ugly conquest of the native Hawaiians . . . crippling disease brought by missionaries . . . the indenturing system that kept Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino immigrants stooped sunup to sunset in [the fields]."

Candidate Obama proudly tells audiences that his white grandparents were raised in the American heartland. But in *Dreams* he describes this heartland as the "landlocked center of the country, a place where decency and endurance and the pioneer spirit were joined at the hip with conformity and suspicion and the potential for unblinking cruelty."

Candidate Obama fondly tells audiences that one of his earliest memories is of sitting on his grandfather's shoulders proudly watching the Apollo astronauts return to Hawaii after their splash-down in the Pacific. But in *Dreams*, even this event is an occasion for outrage, as Obama asks: "How could America send men into space and still keep its black citizens in bondage?"

American affluence offends Obama. The vast upper-middle class lives in a land of isolation and sterility. As a teenager, he envies the white homes in the suburbs but senses that the big pretty houses contain "quiet depression" and "loneliness," represented by "a mother sneaking a tumbler of gin in the afternoon." American consumer culture is comforting but mentally and spiritually numbing, yielding a "long hibernation."

Studying U.S. law at Harvard, Obama concludes it is mainly about "expediency or greed." Working in a large modern corporation, he sees himself as a "spy behind enemy lines." Even science and technology draw his disdain as he warns of "technology that spits out goods from its robot mouth."

Finishing *Dreams*, I could not recall a single positive sentence about the United States or European society. I reread the book specifically looking for positive remarks. The pickings were lean. Obama does write glowingly of JFK's Camelot and its promise of a "bright new world," but concludes this promise was a mere illusion quickly transformed into "war, riot, and famine." At the end of the book, Obama acknowledges that "faith in other people" can be found everywhere: among Christians as well as Muslims and in Kansas as well as his beloved Kenya. If you're looking for rousing patriotism, that's about as good as Obama gets.

Earlier this year, Michelle Obama made headlines by declaring that her husband's primary victories were the first time she had ever been "proud of my country." Michelle's remark simply echoes the assessment Barack presents in his 442-page autobiography: Aside from a few comments about what he regards as the largely unsuccessful struggle for civil rights in the Sixties, Obama has nothing positive to say about his country. Even his hopes for the future are modest and "sometimes hard to sustain."

POST-RACIAL OBAMA

Obama is touted as a post-racial statesman who sees beyond the narrow issue of white versus black. The Obama of his autobiography is, to the contrary, obsessed with race: Almost all of *Dreams* is about race and race conflict.

Obama's early life is marked by uncertainty and rootlessness. Born in Hawaii, he is abandoned by his black Kenyan father at age two. At six he goes to live in Indonesia with his white mother and Indonesian stepfather. At age ten, he leaves his mother and returns to Hawaii, where he spends the rest of his youth, living mainly with his lower-middle-class white grandparents and attending an expensive, almost-all-white prep school.

In multiracial Hawaii, Obama's encounters with racism, he admits, are pretty slight. On occasion, he deploys what he calls a "bad-assed nigger pose," but he understands its artificiality. Obama seems well accepted by the youth around him, but, inside, he feels anxious and apart. A turning point in the narrative occurs when some of his white teenage friends attend an otherwise all-black party with him but feel uncomfortable and ask to leave. Obama is enraged and wants to punch his friends.

Finishing *Dreams*, I could not recall a single positive sentence about the United States or European society.

He begins to inundate himself in black literature: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and W. E. B. DuBois. Saturated with themes of anger and alienation, Obama withdraws into a "smaller and smaller coil of rage." He suffers a "nightmare vision" of black powerlessness and feels whites have maimed blacks with a tragic "self contempt." Malcolm X becomes his favorite author, although he admits all the talk about "blue-eyed devils and apocalypse" is a bit much.

Teenage Obama now sees himself as a "would-be black." He begins to deliberately craft a black identity with alienation and anger at its foundation. The reader of *Dreams* cannot help being struck by the unexplained contrast between the circumstances of Obama's life—an opportunity to attend a fine school, white grandparents who love him—and his great anger at white society.

Today, Candidate Obama presents himself as a multiracial American who is proud of his mixed ancestry and can comfortably draw from both his white and his black roots. In *Dreams*, he takes the opposite stance. He deliberately and repeatedly rejects a multiracial identity. For example, attending an expensive private college in California, he meets many young people of mixed black and white ancestry who view themselves, not as black, but as multiracial. Obama specifically rejects this option as a sellout. He also rejects integration as a goal because it is "a one-way street. The minority is assimilated into the dominant culture, not the other way around."

After college, Obama has an affluent white girlfriend who loves and wants to marry him. She brings him to visit her family, who

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warmly accept him. Obama is attached to the girl and respects the family's deep cultural heritage, but he eventually dumps her because she is not black. He feels that if he marries her he will ultimately be assimilated into a foreign white culture, a fate that is unacceptable to him.

Obama comes to define and identify himself as a black man. As a young man he views his white ancestry not as an asset, but as an impediment to achieving authentic blackness. The dozens of cultural and historic figures appearing throughout *Dreams* are almost all black. (White author Joseph Conrad makes a token appearance as a deranged racist.) Obama identifies his principal role models: Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and W. E. B. DuBois. He states that while he might love his white grandfather and Indonesian stepfather, he could "never emulate" them because of the racial difference: They were "white men and brown men whose fates didn't speak to my own."

Obama is fascinated by his black ancestry. When he journeys to Kenya he has a deep sense of joy and belonging—he feels he has

Candidate behind a Curtain

Connoisseurs are already inscribing Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign into the annals of political theater. From the point of view of spectacle—prescinding, I mean, from any question of content—it is difficult not to admire the disciplined seamlessness Team O has constructed. From the oratory to the haberdashery and beyond, you sense the calculating hand of a seasoned political dramaturge. That dark suit. That white shirt, open at the neck or, when formal occasion demands, pinioned by the signature pale blue tie. What Obama wears are not so much suits as costumes. His message is communicated less by his speeches than by his slogans, or perhaps "mantras" would be more accurate. His overall image is not so much the projection of a personality as the coefficient of his theatrical props: the logos, the posters, and that late if unlamented pseudo presidential seal.

Given the constraints of present-day democratic society, I doubt Leni Riefenstahl could have done much better. What we're dealing with, though, is less *The Triumph of the Will* than a spoiled yuppie's version of the Children's Crusade. "Vero possumus" reads the legend on the Big O pseudo presidential seal. It doesn't have quite the ring of "E pluribus unum," but it does contain a reassuring echo of Bob the Builder: "Can we build it? Yes we can!"

Candidate and seal

The indispensable term for understanding the Obama aesthetic is kitsch, by which I do not mean bad, cloying art but the deliberate sentimentalization, i.e., the avoidance, of reality. Take another look at the Big O seal. What's that under the Bob the Builder Latin? A rising sun? A long and winding yellow brick road? Who knows? But I find it hard to look at the device without hearing strains of Judy Garland singing "Somewhere over the Rainobama" and thinking of that scene toward the end of *The Wizard of Oz* where we're enjoined to "pay no attention to that man behind the curtain."

Actually, the question of identity is as pressing when you think about the fantasy that Team Obama is spinning as it is when you see *The Wizard of Oz*. What, really, do we know about Obama? Once you go beyond the props and slogans, there is a disturbing and, one assumes, deliberate vacancy about the man. Who is Obama? Where does he come from? Who are his friends? What does he believe in? These are not easy questions to answer, at least not if you want to go beyond the calorie-free rhetorical pabulum of "Change we can believe in."

Several people have noted the large debt that Obama's favored campaign artists owe to socialist realism. When his campaign is not displaying posters of Che Guevera, it is sporting Shepard Fairey's *Change*, Scott Hansen's *Progress* (both of which are sold out at Obama's web site), or Antar Dayal's *Yes We Can*. All would have won a smile from Uncle Joe, who also liked his art graphically primitive, ideologically conformist, and morally and politically uplifting. And the continuity, I believe, is more than graphic. Obama's aesthetic shares the spirit of socialist realism, but adds a non-sugar sweetener to the mix. Stalin's worker-facing-the-future was sweaty, muscular kitsch. Images of the leader-facing-the-future-over-the-imperative-of-change are spiritually kindred productions redone for the delicate sensibilities of Obama's decaffeinated-latte-drinking, metrosexual, *New York Times*–reading claque.

There is something deeply childish about the Obama aesthetic. But it would be a great mistake to believe that immaturity is a guarantee of innocuousness. There is nothing at all innocent about Obama's all-encompassing aesthetic, any more than there was about the more obviously minatory aesthetic of socialist realism. What Team Obama offers is socialism lite, with fantasy plugged in where the realism used to be. At bottom, the issue that Obama's aesthetic raises belongs not to art criticism but to the question of our political future. The crucial thing to bear in mind is how uncompromising Obama's aesthetic is. Recently, a television interviewer asked Obama if he had any doubts. "Never" was his response. That's the answer he requires you to have as well.

—ROGER KIMBALL

JEFF HAYNES/GETTY

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finally come home. By contrast, he has very little interest in his white ancestors or in the history of white America. He views U.S. history simply as a melodrama in which whites crush blacks (although class oppression and brutality against other minorities provide secondary plotlines).

It is true that Obama never abandons his affection for his white mother and grandparents. The memory of his immediate white relatives does remind him that not all whites are culpable racists and that some "could be exempted from the general category of distrust." But beyond this he has no identification or psychic ties to larger white society.

Dreams does present one exception to Obama's black exclusiveness. As Obama studies radical Marxist-Leninist literature (Frantz Fanon, neocolonialism, etc.), he comes to see himself as the champion not just of blacks but of the downtrodden of all races. But this shift only distances him farther from the dominant white and European culture, which he views as the focal point of global exploitation. Even in his thirties, he writes with enthusiasm about the Viet Cong, the Mau Mau Uprising, and black rioters in Detroit who lashed out with "street crime and revolution" against complacent white oppressors.

HATRED

Generally, Obama sees an unbridgeable gulf between races: "The other race would always remain just that: menacing, alien, and apart." He states that at the core of black consciousness is the experience of white hatred of blacks. This hatred inspires an anger in turn that can either be directed out toward whites or in toward blacks themselves, in self-loathing:

> [Black awareness] hadn't arisen simply from struggles with pestilence or drought, or even mere poverty. [It] had arisen out of a very particular experience with hate [of whites toward blacks]. That hate hadn't gone away; it formed a counternarrative buried deep within each person and at the center of which stood white people—some cruel, some ignorant, sometimes a single face, sometimes just a faceless image of a system claiming power over our lives.

As a youth, Obama is shocked when a black mentor tells him that "black people have reason to hate," but later comes to accept this view. He ponders whether the "ghostly figure" of white hatred can ever be "exorcised" from black dreams. And he goes so far as to ask whether blacks can love themselves without hating whites, but provides no answer.

Candidate Obama declared that he was shocked when he heard Rev. Jeremiah's Wright's outrageous remarks about American society. Despite the fact that he had been a member of Wright's church for over a decade, Obama asserted that he had never heard such remarks from his spiritual mentor before.

But in the autobiography, Wright's rants are in plain view. It is obvious that Obama is drawn to Wright's ministry not in ignorance, but precisely because of the Reverend's politics. In *Dreams*, Wright asserts: "Life's not safe for a black man in this country, Barack. Never has been. Probably never will be." Obama apparently agrees, ignoring the obvious facts that nearly all black homicides are committed by other blacks, and that the number of violent crimes committed by blacks against whites is about eight times greater than the number of such crimes by whites against blacks.

When Wright, in the pages of *Dreams*, rants from the pulpit about Hiroshima and proclaims that "white folks' greed runs a world in need," it's not so jarring, since Obama has been saying pretty much the same thing throughout the book. Obama expresses joy and a real sense of belonging in connection with only three places: his childhood home in Indonesia, Kenya, and in the pews of Reverend Wright's Trinity United Church.

OBAMA AND THE UNDERCLASS

In his personal life, Obama has received highly favorable treatment from white society. His grievance appears, at least on the surface, to be abstract rather than personal. It is the existence of the black poor and underclass that justifies his alienation from and hostility to his nation. For Obama, the black ghetto epitomizes the callousness, greed, and injustice of U.S. society.

Obama became a community organizer in south Chicago to save the black urban poor and underclass. This was no mere job to Obama; it was a quasi-religious calling, his mission in life, offering the promise of personal "redemption." But at only one point does Obama pause in his narrative and ask the big questions. Contemplating the tangle of homicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and educational failure that blights the public-housing complex where he is working, he asks: What causes this? Who is responsible? After all, there are no white people there, "no cigar-chomping crackers . . . no club-wielding Pinkerton thugs."

With this question, Obama broaches the central paradox of modern race relations. Why, at a point when white society ended segregation, created affirmative action, and erected a massive new welfare state, did the self-destructive behaviors of the black lower classes soar, and entire communities begin spiraling downward in devastating social entropy? But, having raised this question, Obama offers no answer. The only solution he suggests is increased HUD funding. Some pages later he returns to vague charges about racism and hidden structures of power.

Elsewhere in *Dreams*, however, Obama hints at an explanation for this silence. He says that focusing on the self-destructive behavior of the black underclass smacks of "the explanations that whites had always offered of black poverty: that we continued to suffer from, if not genetic inferiority, then cultural weakness." A focus on behavior will only confirm the "worst suspicions" of blacks about themselves, pushing them deeper into helplessness and despair.

Black well-being therefore requires that the blame for black behavior always be placed in historic context—that is, shifted to whites. If 69 percent of black children are born out of wedlock, if blacks kill blacks, if black-run schools don't teach, it is the white man's fault. Alternative explanations will only relieve white guilt while raising black self-doubt.

SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

Dreams from My Father reveals Barack Obama as a self-constructed, racially obsessed man who regards most whites as oppressors. It is the work of a clever but shallow thinker who confuses ideological cliché for insight—a man who sees U.S. history as a narrow, bitter tale of race and class victimization. The Barack Obama presented in these pages is not electable to national office. No wonder that Obama, aided by a compliant media, has created a new self for public view, one the Obama of *Dreams* wouldn't recognize and probably would disdain. **NR**

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Soldier for Stroger

The candidate of change helped keep Chicago politics dirty

DAVID FREDDOSO

WHAT is it like to work for the government of Cook County, Ill.? Simple. If you have the right political connections, you get the job. You get the raise. You get the promotion. You don't need to be qualified. You might not even need an interview. The job might not even be advertised to the public.

If you don't have the political connections, you might get a job, but you don't get the raise. You get no promotions, but you do get plenty of extra work that falls outside your job description. At some point, you're probably assigned to train an unqualified political stooge, sent from "downtown" to take that supervisory job for which you applied and for which you were actually qualified.

This system has a clear purpose. It is the basic building block of a political machine. It allows politicians to maintain a standing army of pamphleteers, door-knockers, fundraisers, and campaign contributors at taxpayer expense. Such an army can make the difference in a close election. More important, it deters serious political opponents from even trying.

This is how the late John Stroger, former president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, allegedly kept himself in power until a stroke forced him to retire in 2006. Nothing has changed under his successor—his son, Todd Stroger—according to a 54-page federal report featuring numerous quotes from government employees' complaints. Cook County's federal compliance administrator, former circuit-court judge Julia Nowicki, received 240 such complaints in the first year following her court appointment to oversee county employment practices.

There's no reason the Stroger machine should still be in power. Not long ago, true reformers from both parties worked to bring it down in two different elections, and with Barack Obama's help might have succeeded either time. Instead, Obama ignored the effort in the primary election, and endorsed the machine candidate in the general.

MACHINE POLITICS

Nowicki's February 2008 report includes the charming story of one politically connected employee who just couldn't contain his excitement:

> On his first day in the department, he told a number of his new co-workers he was a "Soldier for Stroger" and he was going to become their supervisor. . . . One witness claims after working at the department for a total of five hours, the employee had already identified co-workers he intended to impose severe discipline upon when he became supervisor.

Sure enough, this individual *was* promoted to supervisor. Nowicki included dozens of similar complaints—Cook County employees' being pressured into political activities and being denied promotions when they refused. She speculated that more employees would come forward but for their fear of retaliation from the young Todd Stroger and his political allies, who took over in late 2006. She wrote that Todd Stroger's human-resources staff appeared to keep multiple personnel files in order to "cover" patronage employment. Stroger denounced Nowicki's report, but admitted later that he had not read it.

It's clear that, in this case, machine politics worked the way they were meant to. John Stroger faced only token opposition for a decade following his 1994 election. And the nonpartisan, Chicago-based Better Government Association provides the following numbers:

- Between early 1999 and the middle of 2005, Stroger raised approximately $2,413,246 in itemized contributions.
- At least $615,078.99 (25.5 percent) came from county contractors and their owners, agents, and employees.
- At least $624,543 (25.8 percent) came from Cook County employees who ultimately report to his office.

More than half of John Stroger's campaign cash was coming from people whose pockets he was lining with tax dollars. And with tax dollars serving him so well, it's no wonder Stroger liked high taxes. In his final two years in office alone, he endorsed a 2 percent hotel-motel tax, a 2 percent "prepared food and beverage" tax, a $200 "automatic amusement device" tax, increases of 8.5 percent and $1 per pack in the property and cigarette taxes respectively, and a tripling of court fees from $5 to $15. He also helped create "tax districts" to assess various special-purpose taxes.

His son Todd has kept the business going. He rammed a sales-tax increase through the Cook County Board of Commissioners; the hike went into effect in early July, and it gives Chicago the highest sales-tax rate of any major city in the United States (10.25 percent).

The younger Stroger often makes no attempt to hide hirings that most would find suspicious. Immediately upon inheriting his father's office, he promoted his cousin to county CFO and gave her a 12 percent pay hike the following month. He hired a friend's wife and a childhood friend to six-figure jobs. He hired an unqualified friend to a top health job—created just for this friend, apparently. When the newspapers discovered this last hire, the friend got demoted to a position that pays a mere $86,000 a year.

While handing out salaries to his buddies, Todd Stroger claimed the county lacked funds. He shut down several health clinics, laid off hundreds of nurses from the county hospital named after his father, and cut 43 prosecutors from the state attorney's office. In total, 1,700 county workers were laid off. Few, presumably, were "Soldiers for Stroger."

MARCH 2006: OBAMA'S SILENCE

As a presidential candidate, Obama has styled himself a reformer. But in early 2006 he knew exactly how the Stroger

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Mr. Freddoso's book *The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate*, from which this essay is adapted, is available from Regnery Publishing.

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machine worked, was the most popular politician in Illinois, and had already become a star in the national Democratic party. Were there any link between style and substance—had Obama lifted even his pinkie finger in the name of a county government "we can believe in"—there would be no Stroger in power today. The problem is, had he endorsed the elder Stroger's serious challenger in the March 2006 Democratic primary, he might have lost the support of some of his most important allies and donors.

That reformist challenger, Forrest Claypool, was a progressive county commissioner. Local politicians of the Left and the Right, weary of corruption, lined up behind Claypool in the kind of post-partisanship Obama extols today. The other anti-Stroger candidate, Democratic commissioner Michael Quigley, dropped out of the race to present a unified reform campaign—he even became Claypool's campaign manager. He declared that Stroger "cynically abuses" the trust of poor people who depend on county government, by "wasting precious resources on the hangers-on—the contractors and the patronage workers."

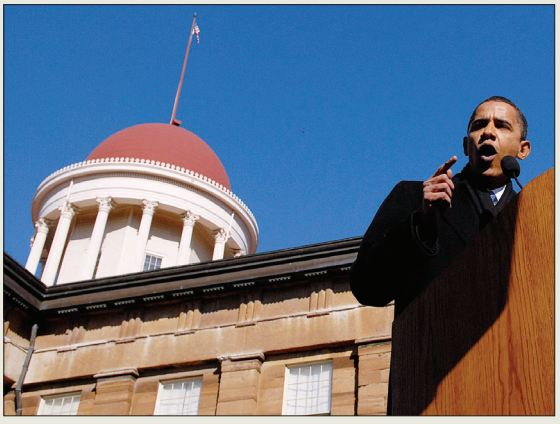
Media outlets of all stripes joined in. The *Chicago Tribune* editorialized that "county government works for Stroger's pals, not for the people and businesses that pay taxes. And it certainly doesn't work for the impoverished people who have nowhere else to turn." Days before the primary election, *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Neil Steinberg framed the voters' choice this way:

> Isn't it enough that Stroger has turned Cook County government into a bog of waste, cronyism and incompetence? Isn't it enough

Present But Not Accounted For

In *The Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama bemoaned the injustice one faced as a state legislator in a chamber controlled by the other party: "You must vote yes or no on whatever bill comes up, with the knowledge that it's unlikely to be a compromise that either you or your supporters consider fair and or just."

Actually, there's that third option, voting "present"—which accounted for about one of every 31 votes in Obama's legislative career, or 3.2 percent. And while Obama can explain some of his 129 "present" votes in eight years in the Illinois Senate, his frequent use of that third option stands out, even by the usual low standard of politicians trying to dodge tough decisions and cover their backs.



Noncommittal in Springfield

On seven abortion votes, Obama's explanation was that groups like Planned Parenthood wanted to get as many legislators as possible voting "present." The idea was—this is the *Chicago Tribune*'s paraphrase of the organization's top Illinois lobbyist—to make the votes "look less like a hedge or a cop-out and more like a constitutional concern or other high-minded qualm." (Passing legislation in the Illinois senate takes affirmative votes; all of Obama's "presents" were effectively another way of saying no.) That's what Obama did on two separate attempts to ban partial-birth abortion, two parental-notification abortion bills, and three bills to protect a child if it survived a failed abortion. But Obama's explanation on the last—that it did not include a provision stating the bill was not meant to influence the legal standing of a fetus before birth one way or another—was simply untrue; the bill had been amended to include the exact provision he claimed was necessary.

Beyond that, some of Obama's "present" votes were on pretty straightforward legislation: a bill to prohibit sex-related shops from opening within 1,000 feet of schools, day-care centers, or places of worship; a bill that required mandatory adult prosecution for firing a gun on or near school grounds; a bill to ban the introduction of new evidence to a judge in the sentencing phase of the trial, after a jury conviction; a bill to require teaching respect for others in schools.

A particularly interesting case is a bill that allowed certain victims of sexual crimes to petition judges to seal court records relating to their cases. Obama sponsored the legislation, but before it reached the floor, the Illinois Press Association argued the bill might violate the First Amendment. Thus, Obama voted "present" on a bill he sponsored—and later insisted in a debate with Hillary Clinton that "nobody has worked harder than me in the Illinois state legislature to make sure that victims of sexual abuse were dealt with."

Obama has justified several "present" votes by insisting the bill at hand was unconstitutional. But one might think that violation of the state's constitution would be sufficient justification to vote in the negative. (If that doesn't warrant a "no" vote, what does?)

Obama's fans, including Illinois attorney general Lisa Madigan, have contended the "present" votes represent the "exact opposite" of "a lack of leadership." But then again, every other lawmaker in the chamber faced the difficult choice, and the vast majority of them found themselves deciding, "No, because while I support the bill's overall goals, I didn't like this provision" or "Yes, because while I don't like every part of this bill, I think its benefits outweigh the flaws." Only in Obama's case is a refusal to make a yes-or-no decision deemed a sign of leadership.

—JIM GERAGHTY

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> that a solid, respectable, smart alternative exists? Claypool is a longtime reformer who has fought heroically to make Cook County better and more effective—if you are voting to try to improve the vital Cook County services, the vote is for Claypool. If you vote your race [Stroger was black], for any clown, no matter how ignored and betrayed you are year-in, year-out, then go for Stroger.

In the last two weeks, it appeared that Claypool might pull off a victory. But Stroger pulled out all the stops, with Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley and even Bill Clinton recording ads on his behalf. The machine organizations worked overtime to turn out the pro-Stroger vote.

Stroger won by seven percentage points—42,000 of 600,000 votes cast. Black voters carried Stroger, which is why it's so important that Claypool's supporters didn't include Barack Obama: By withholding his endorsement, Obama probably saved the machine.

It is no mystery why he did so. A Claypool endorsement would have alienated Emil Jones Jr., the machine politician who claims, not inaccurately, to have "made" Obama a U.S. senator in the 2004 election. It would have angered Mayor Daley, who controls Chicago's political money (and whose machine puts Stroger's to shame). It might have upset Obama's close friend Tony Rezko—who had given Stroger nearly $150,000, who once served as Stroger's finance chairman, and who had business ties to the Stroger family. It would have slighted every alderman, county commissioner, and ward boss who had door-knockers and small donors and family members on the county payroll.

Claypool has been a good sport about his loss, and now supports Obama's presidential campaign. But earlier this year, he became a bit despondent when asked why Obama had failed to help him in 2006. "I don't know," he told television journalist Jeff Berkowitz. "I mean, look, politics is complex. People have multiple relationships and they do the things they have to do and believe in."

Barack Obama has never done or even said anything to help solve Chicago's problem. He cannot do so because he has "multiple relationships"; his political allies—not just the Strogers, but nearly all of the politicians upon whom he depends for support—*are* Chicago's problem.

NOVEMBER 2006: LIES AND SCARE TACTICS

There was still a chance, in the general election, to defeat the Strogers. But instead of keeping silent as he had in the primaries, Obama supported the machine.

The elder Stroger, who suffered his stroke just before winning the primary election, disappeared from public view for three full months. He would eventually drop off the ballot, but not before the June 26 deadline for independent candidates to file. That way, he could execute a bait-and-switch without letting the ensuing controversy create an opening for a credible third-party opponent. John Stroger would exit the race, and the friendly Cook County Democratic party would choose his son Todd to take his place. Reform-minded Democrats—including U.S. Rep. Danny Davis—tried to prevent this shady electoral stunt, but to no avail. The fix was in.

Progressive Chicagoans were not happy with this outcome. Conservatives were fuming. Todd Stroger was an underachieving alderman, criticized by one liberal columnist as an "unimaginative legislative drone." Claypool said he would not vote for Todd Stroger. Several Democrats—including Frank Coconate, chairman of the Northwest Side Democratic Organization—went so far as to endorse the Republican candidate (former Democrat Tony Peraica).

The press actually thought Peraica had a chance, even though Cook County had not had a Republican board president in 36 years. Once again, liberals and conservatives came together, this time behind a Republican. But Obama endorsed the young Stroger in a widely publicized letter to supporters, co-signed by Illinois's senior senator, Dick Durbin. They wrote:

> Today we write to urge your attention to one race in particular. Our friend, Todd Stroger, former state representative and alderman, is candidate for president of the Cook County Board. Please consider voting for Todd. . . . Todd is a good progressive Democrat, who will bring those values and sensibilities to the job.

The endorsement disgusted Chicago liberals. *Chicago Tribune* commentator Eric Zorn wrote of it:

> Obama and Durbin take an epistolary dive into the mud and start yammering in the letter about Republican challenger Tony Peraica's conservative stance on social issues that almost never come before the County Board. In particular, they raise the fear that Peraica would unilaterally put a halt to abortions at county hospitals, even though Peraica has repeatedly pledged that he will not.
>
> "We've come too far for that," says the letter.
>
> And Obama has come too far as an inspiring new breed of politician on the national scene to muck around in local politics, endorsing machine hack candidates and substituting party for principle. Or so you'd imagine.

Welcome to the "new politics." Obama put partisanship ahead of reform, using what both liberals and conservatives recognized as lies and scare tactics. Stroger defeated his opponent in an unusually close general election in November 2006.

Todd Stroger is not the only questionable candidate Obama has endorsed. In the same primary election in which he failed to endorse Forrest Claypool, Obama supported a candidate for state treasurer who, through his family bank, had been personally involved in loans to organized-crime figures—and who misled the press when first asked about it. The following year, Obama would endorse an alderman who once allegedly pulled a gun on her colleagues during a contentious ward-redistricting hearing. (The former candidate won, the latter lost.)

In 2007, Obama endorsed Mayor Daley for reelection—barely two months after three of Daley's top aides received federal prison sentences for fraud in connection with running the City Hall patronage machine, and barely a year after dozens of city contractors and employees had been convicted of trading city contracts for campaign contributions and bribes. These included high-ranking Daley aides and appointees.

Barack Obama's efforts to preserve the Windy City's crooked machine politics are typical of the approach he has taken toward reform throughout his service in both Springfield and Washington. He talks of change, but he simultaneously uses the existing corrupt system to get ahead. It is a far cry from the message that has so impressed his supporters. **NR**

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the long view

ROB LONG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

All changes marked with "***"

MONDAY

7:45 AM: Sound check, final loading of staging platforms and risers. Balloons filled with helium and suspended in nets from the ceiling.
***7:47 AM:** John Edwards Address—the former senator gives a rousing speech, sounding his signature themes of economic justice and "Two Americas." [Formerly: final podium adjustments.]
***7:49 AM:** John Edwards concludes his address.
***8:00 AM: "**A Tribute to the Other Candidates"—the unsuccessful candidates for the nomination are allowed to walk slowly through the empty hall. [Formerly: fire drill.]
***8:30 AM:** Bill Clinton located, placed under house arrest.
9:00 AM: Convention officially opens.
***10:00 AM:** Three-dimensional holographic image of nominee appears around the convention space, beaming beatifically. [Formerly: a tribute to our Olympic champions.]
***3:00 PM:** Sick children report being healed by three-dimensional image.
***4:00 PM:** Sen. Hillary Clinton released from sequestration, allowed to visit restroom. First small meal.
***4:15 PM:** Sen. Hillary Clinton returned to sequestration.
***4:30 PM:** Evening programming begins with "A Tribute to NASCAR" and "An All-Star Country Band, Middle-America Sing-Along, Hoedown Hollerin' I Love America Parade." [Formerly: "Celebrate Diversity: Many Visions and Voices from America's Gay and Lesbian Communities."]
***8:00 PM:** Sen. Hillary Clinton—1000mg Thorazine, 150mg Ambien.
***9:00 PM:** 3-D Holographic Image of Nominee rises to the heavens. [Formerly: Address by Sen. Barbara Boxer.]

TUESDAY

***10:00 AM:** Sen. Hillary Clinton 1000mg Valium.
***11:45 AM:** Sen. Hillary Clinton released from captivity, allowed to walk escorted through convention hall in protective plastic bubble.
***8:00 PM:** Address by Sen. Hillary Clinton.
***8:11 PM:** Convention gaveled to a close.
***8:30 PM:** Nominee begins appearing to children everywhere.

WEDNESDAY

*** **6:00 PM:** Nominee appears outside the convention hall in a pillar of purifying flame.
***7:00 PM:** Nominee appears in hall as a giant floating head, and floats above his vice-presidential choice.
***7:10 PM:** Choir begins singing.
***7:30 PM:** Vice-presidential nominee begins trembling; is quieted by crowd, dressed in robes, and anointed with oil. [Formerly: Vice-presidential nominee address.]
***8:00 PM:** Nominee's floating head begins to speak.

PLEASE NOTE ALL CHANGES ARE TENTATIVE. PRESS LIAISON WILL UPDATE AS NECESSARY. CHECK THE CONVENTION WEBSITE FOR LAST-MINUTE ADDITIONS.

SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

All changes marked with "***"

MONDAY

***[PLEASE NOTE: Because of the advanced age of the candidate and most of the conventioneers, Monday's morning program has been moved to the Day Activity Room of the Sunnyside Assisted Living Facility, West Cedar Street, Minneapolis. Press vans will gather at the convention site at 8:30 AM.]
***9:00 AM** Senior Stretch Aerobics with John McCain—the nominee leads the conventioneers in a low-impact stretch-aerobics class, tailored specifically to the needs of seniors.
***4:00 PM:** Conventioneers begin "Early Bird Dinner" break.
***5:00 PM:** Convention Evening Programming begins with "A Tribute to NASCAR" and "An All-Star Country Band, Middle-America Sing-Along, Hoedown Hollerin' I Love America Parade," live by satellite from the deck of an offshore oil derrick. [Formerly: "A Tribute to NASCAR" and "An All-Star Country Band, Middle-America Sing-Along, Hoedown Hollerin' I Love America Parade," live from the convention hall.]
***3:30 AM:** Address by Vice Pres. Dick Cheney.
***3:50 AM:** Address by Pres. George W. Bush.

TUESDAY

***6:00 AM:** Conventioneers wake up in hotel room, feel disoriented. Complain about breakfast prices.
***7:00 AM:** Conventioneers wait for shuttle buses to convention venue, complain about driver discourtesy.
***8:00 AM:** Conventioneers issued "Little Rascal" electric personal-transportation devices.
***10:00 AM Workshop:** "From Swift Boats to Paris Hilton: How to Make, Shoot, Edit, and Post Your Anonymous Viral Video." [Formerly: "A Tribute to America's First Responders."]
***4:30 PM:** Nominee eats "Early Bird Dinner" with conventioneers.
***6:00 PM:** Vice-presidential nominee addresses the convention from the control room of San Onofre Nuclear Generating Center.
***6:45 PM:** Convention gaveled to a close for the evening.
***7:00 PM:** Conventioneers go to bed.
***7:15 PM:** Conventioneers double-check deadbolts and latches on hotel-room doors.
***8:10 PM:** Conventioneers call down to front desk to ask about strange noises in hallways.
***8:30 PM:** Conventioneers toss and turn, unable to sleep due to agitation when made aware of minibar prices.

WEDNESDAY

*** **6:00 PM:** Oil well constructed, drilling through podium floor. [Formerly: opening interfaith benediction.]
***6:30 PM:** Address by Sen. John McCain.
***6:55 PM:** Well strikes oil. Nominee and running mate showered with crude.
***7:00 PM:** Balloon drop.

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Sun./Nov. 9	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars
Mon./Nov. 10	Grand Turk,	7:00AM	3:00PM	afternoon seminar late-night smoker
Tue./Nov. 11	San Juan, Puerto Rico	10:00AM	11:00PM	
Wed./Nov. 12	St. Thomas, USVI	8:00AM	5:00PM	evening cocktail reception
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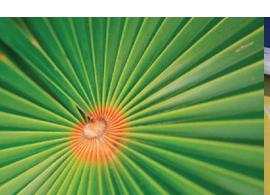
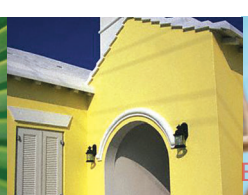

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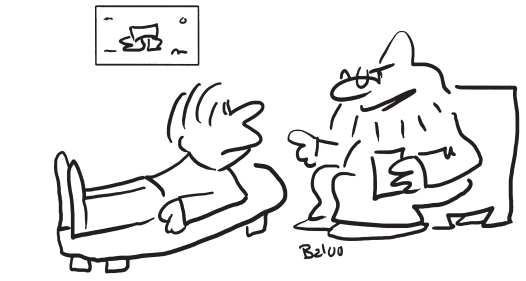

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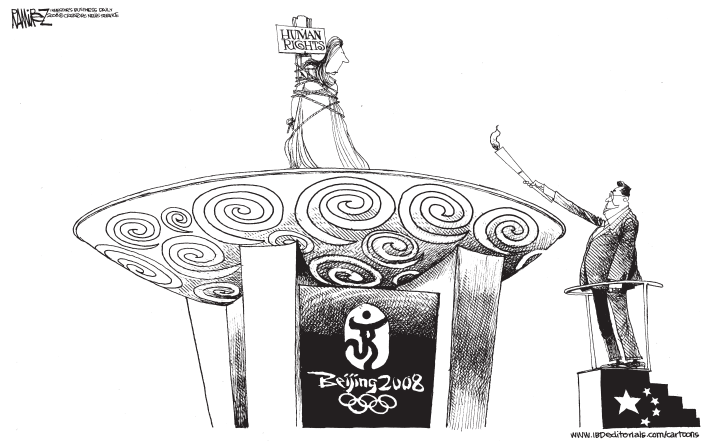
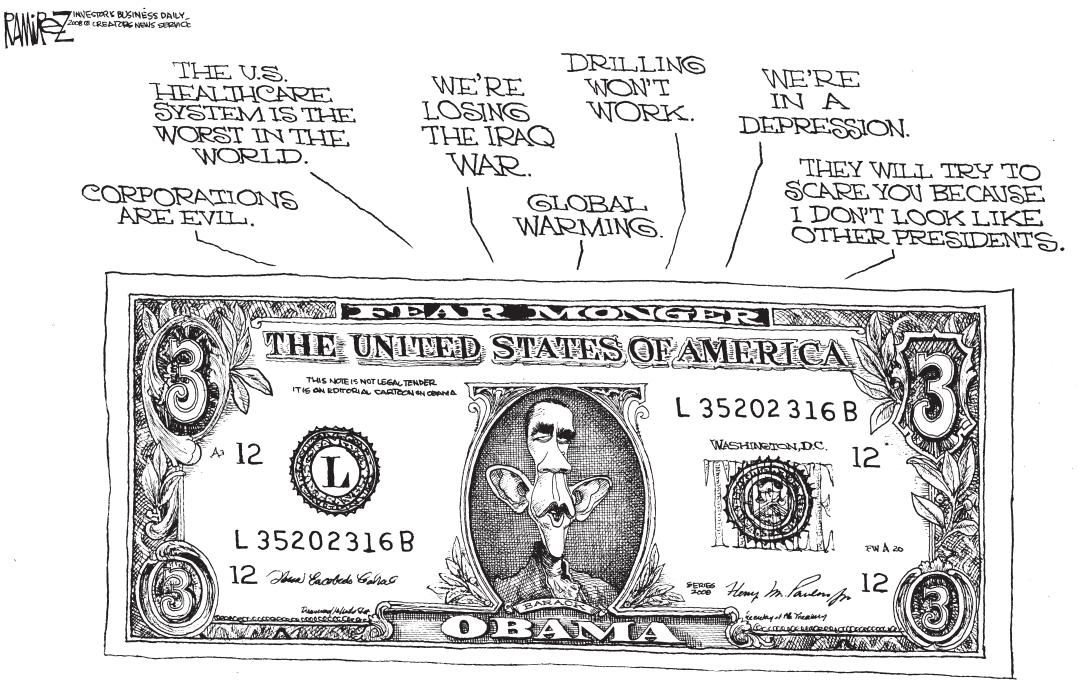


Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
1918 – 2008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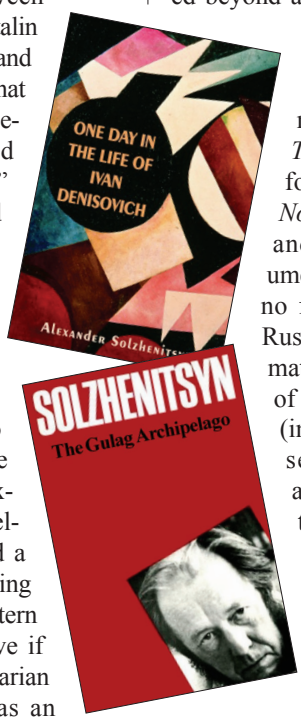
Hero of a Dark Century

DANIEL J. MAHONEY

With the death of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn the world has lost one of the great souls of this or any age. His story was beyond improbable: A former prisoner or "zek" in the vast system of Soviet prisons and labor camps who had also miraculously survived a bout with abdominal cancer, an "underground writer" who never expected a single word of his to be published in his own lifetime, Solzhenitsyn was catapulted to world fame with the November 1962 publication of his novella *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Nikita Khrushchev, the most "humane" of Soviet leaders, mistook Solzhenitsyn for a Soviet loyalist whose movingly understated account of a single day in the life of a simple peasant unjustly incarcerated in a Soviet labor camp would be useful to his own efforts at "de-Stalinization." Khrushchev, who never completely lost touch with his own peasant roots, was undoubtedly also genuinely moved by this powerful testament to the human spirit. The soon-to-be-deposed Soviet leader may have been the first to misunderstand and underestimate Solzhenitsyn.

Solzhenitsyn was a writer in the grand 19th-century Russian literary tradition who was supremely confident in the power of literature, rooted in truth and the best ethical traditions of Russia and the West, to defeat violence and lies, the twin pillars of 20th-century totalitarianism. And he was right. *The Gulag Archipelago*, his monumental three-volume "experiment in literary investigation," as he suggestively subtitled that remarkable work, did more than any other piece of writing or political act in the 20th century to delegitimize the entire Communist enterprise.

Solzhenitsyn traced the origins of totalitarian repression and the gulag concentration-camp system to Lenin himself. He showed beyond doubt that Leninist Communism was beyond redemption and that the distinction between a "good" Lenin and a "bad" Stalin was untenable on both moral and historical grounds. In a voice that was at once sardonic and graceful, the former zek mocked the "Progressive Doctrine" (Marxism-Leninism) and showed that it did not contain a single truth about the nature of man, society, or the human soul.



The publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* in Paris on December 28, 1973, led to Solzhenitsyn's forced exile from the Soviet Union, an exile he neither sought nor welcomed. In the West he faced a new set of challenges, including the incomprehension of Western elites who mistook this brave if sometimes prickly anti-totalitarian writer and moral witness as an advocate for new forms of authoritarianism. His return to Russia brought a different set of challenges and burdens as Solzhenitsyn faced the initial apathy of a public that did not want to come to terms with the crimes of the Communist past and the rise of a new "oligarchy" (as he was the first to call it in his speech to the Duma in October 1994) disguising itself as a democracy. In the West (and in Russia, too, at least among the Left-liberal Muscovite intellectuals) Solzhenitsyn continued to be lied about as no great writer or public figure has been lied about in modern times. He responded to these terrible distortions ("theocrat," "anti-Semite," "a new Russian Ayatollah") for the first and last time in a masterful 1983 essay called "Our Pluralists." He was above his critics' pettiness and, in any case, preoccupied with his two great moral and literary "missions."

I.

The first mission was to tell the truth about Communism and all its works, as he did in *The Gulag Archipelago* and so many of his speeches and writings until the day he finally left this earth. The other mission was to recover the full truth about Russia's past, a past that had been distorted beyond all recognition by the Soviet propaganda machine. This Solzhenitsyn attempted to do particularly in his great multi-volume chef d'oeuvre *The Red Wheel*, consisting of four "knots"—*August 1914*, *November 1916*, *March 1917*, and *April 1917*—in ten volumes. That work, coming in at no fewer than 6,000 pages in Russian, combined fiction, dramatized history, and a full array of modernistic literary devices (including innovative "screen sequences" and newspaper and newsreel reports). Its thesis was that there was nothing inevitable about the Bolshevik Revolution, that human action, agency, and statesmanship could have put Russia on the path to rational and humane liberty. But absent such efforts, the revolution took on the character of a profound and unstoppable movement, a "gigantic cosmic wheel" in which "everybody, including those who turn it, becomes a helpless atom."

Solzhenitsyn's beau ideal of a statesman was Pyotr Stolypin, the remarkably capable prime minister of Russia between 1906 and 1911. Before he was assassinated in the Kiev opera house in the fall of 1911, Stolypin worked assiduously to create a regime of citizen-proprietors in Russia, one that would hew to a "middle line" between reaction and nihilistic revolution. But as Solzhenitsyn wrote mem-

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orably in *November 1916* (with Stolypin's "greatness" clearly in mind), "nothing is more difficult than drawing a middle line for social development. The loud mouth, the big fist, the bomb, the prison bars, are of no help to you, as they are to those at the two extremes. Following the middle path demands the utmost self-control, the most inflexible courage, the most patient calculation, the most precise knowledge." Contrary to legend, Solzhenitsyn saw himself as a "true liberal" who saw through the "false liberals" who persisted in seeing no enemies to the left. In literature and politics, he defended what he called in a January 19, 1993, address to the National Arts Club in New York a "healthy conservatism" that was "equally sensitive to the old and the new, to venerable and worthy traditions, and to the freedom to explore without which no future can ever be born."

II.

Serious readers of *The Gulag Archipelago* will already be familiar with the broad outlines of Solzhenitsyn's remarkable odyssey from Marxism to what might fittingly be called "philosophical Christianity" (Solzhenitsyn was an adherent of Orthodox Christianity but his religious affirmations were more philosophical and less narrowly sectarian than many of his admirers and critics appreciate). Paradoxically, it was only as a result of his time in prison and the camps that the scales completely fell from Solzhenitsyn's eyes concerning the crimes of Communism. Before his arrest in February 1945 he had been a "true believer" in Marxism-Leninism. From time to time he felt doubts stirring in his soul, but he always found a way to retain his underlying confidence in the justice and necessity of the revolutionary project.

In an unfinished semi-autobiographical novel, *Love the Revolution*, dating from the late 1940s, Solzhenitsyn's alter ego Gleb Nerzhin hears an account of the horrific conditions in slave-labor camps and copper mines of the Russian Northeast. A momentary chill comes over Nerzhin/Solzhenitsyn as he is confronted by the "icy wind" of this "incomprehensible world." "But thanks to a sort of internal flexibility" his convictions are never definitively shaken by these revelations. He is still able to shunt to the side discomfiting truths that reveal the Marxist appeal to "historical necessity" to be the monstrous chimera that it is.

Solzhenitsyn's arrest and incarceration changed everything. Lying on "rotting prison straw," he felt "the first stirrings of good" within his soul. In the famous words of *The Gulag Archipelago*, it was "gradually disclosed" to him "that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right though every human heart—and through all human hearts." But Solzhenitsyn's was not a simple or unmediated return to the faith of his childhood. His recovery of belief was above all made possible by rational reflection on his experience of human nature *in extremis*. The story is told with luminous clarity in the fourth of the seven parts of *The Gulag Archipelago*, "The Soul and Barbed Wire," from which the previous quotation is taken.

In that section of *Gulag* Solzhenitsyn highlights the spiritual "ascent" that is made possible by rejecting the pernicious, soul-destroying idea of "survival at any price." Only fidelity to conscience and to the wellsprings of goodness within the soul allows one to affirm the true goodness of life and the essentially moral character of human existence. These spiritual and philosophical insights never led to "quietism" on Solzhenitsyn's part. He believed that evil must be resisted, especially an inhuman totalitarianism that mutilates the soul and demands active participation in the "lie." Solzhenitsyn himself participated in major camp revolts in the early 1950s (those at Kengir and Ekibastuz are powerfully recounted in the third volume of *The Gulag Archipelago*). In that same volume he paid tribute to all those who resisted Bolshevik tyranny. These lovers of liberty redeemed the honor of the Russian people by defending the right of the human soul to breathe freely.

All of this reveals the multiple ways in which Solzhenitsyn embodied, in thought as well as deed, the two great moral wellsprings of European civilization: humility and magnanimity, humble deference to an "order of things" and the spirited defense of human liberty and dignity. Solzhenitsyn told the German novelist Daniel Kehlmann in an interview that was published in *Le Figaro* in December 2006 that while he had deep sympathy and admiration for simple, decent souls such as Matryona of his 1959 short story "Matryona's House" and the peasant hero Ivan Denisovich, his greatest admiration was reserved for those noble souls who stood up to "radical evil." Solzhenitsyn's soul was sufficiently capacious to do justice both to "the ascent of the soul"—which finally transcends the political sphere—and the pressing requirements of resisting political evil.

Solzhenitsyn's poems from prison, camp, and exile that were published in Russian in 1999 (three of them, expertly translated by his son Ignat Solzhenitsyn, can be found in 2006's *The Solzhenitsyn Reader*) and the original, uncut, 96-chapter edition of *The First Circle* (finished in 1962 and to be published in a complete English translation, at long last, by HarperCollins in 2009) are indispensable for understanding how the Russian writer arrived at his mature intellectual and spiritual convictions. The rejection of Marxism came early, and the return to Christianity rather later, in the process of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. The autobiographical Gleb Nerzhin of *The First Circle* is best described as a skeptic (in the Socratic and not the modern, relativistic sense) and an adherent of the moral law. In a heated exchange with the Marxist Rubin in chapter 47 of *The First Circle*, Nerzhin rejects the idea that phrases like "inviolability of the person" and "moral self-limitation" are merely "class-conditioned ideas." In a liberating affirmation, he proclaims that "justice is the cornerstone, the foundation of the universe. . . . We are born with a sense of justice in our souls; we can't and don't want to live without it!" Nerzhin has no time for "blasted fanatics" who sacrifice

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living, breathing human beings to inhuman abstractions. When Rubin shouts back that Nerzhin was never a Marxist, Nerzhin ruefully responds, "Alas, I was." That sad acknowledgment, laden with self-knowledge, is crucial for understanding Solzhenitsyn's own remarkable *metanoia*.

Justice, conscience, and self-limitation are the great pillars of Solzhenitsyn's moral vision from the late 1940s onward. In the beautiful camp poem "Prisoner's Right," written at Ekibastuz in 1951, Solzhenitsyn is content to invoke the fatalistic view that "all will go as 't will go." The prisoner can find solace in an "illumined interior suffering core" and fidelity to "all those fallen, extinguished, without guilt or trace." His only "right" is to be a "rancorless" son "of our luckless and sad Russian land." Shortly thereafter, in February 1952, Solzhenitsyn made the decisive spiritual turn. In his great poem "Acathistus," he proclaimed his renewed faith in "purpose-from-High's steady fire / Not made plain to me till afterward."

Having succumbed to false "bookish wisdom" (he clearly has in mind Marxism), Solzhenitsyn now looks back with "gratitude, trembling / On the meaningless life I have led." He proclaims his faith in the Living God, and draws sustenance once again from the "water of being." But it should never be forgotten that Solzhenitsyn's Christian affirmation builds upon and deepens but never repudiates the previous moral and philosophical turns at the heart of his rejection of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Solzhenitsyn's vision is first and foremost a *moral* vision available to thinking and acting man on the basis of reason and experience. In Solzhenitsyn's view, Christianity gives the most compelling and self-conscious account of the drama of good and evil in the human soul that the depredations of totalitarianism brought to the forefront.

III.

The tributes and reflections that have been published on Solzhenitsyn in the Western press since his death have generally been respectful, and many have been evenhanded. But quite a few obituaries and retrospectives have repeated hoary distortions that just won't go away. It has been repeatedly asserted that Solzhenitsyn hated Communism *and* Western democracy equally despite the fact that he had repeatedly praised the *civic* experience of the West. This is to confuse his critique of the deeply troubling subjectivist and relativistic trends in its cultural, moral, and intellectual life with a total critique of the West. As Solzhenitsyn put it in a fascinating July 2007 interview with *Der Spiegel*, "I have always insisted on the need for local self-government for Russia, but I never opposed this model to Western democracy. On the contrary I have tried to convince my fellow citizens by citing the examples of highly effective local self-government systems in Switzerland and New England." This theme has been developed at great length in all his political writings over the last 20 years. But the legend of Solzhenitsyn's opposition to democracy—and penchant for authoritarianism—is endlessly recycled in even otherwise friendly accounts of his life and legacy.

Solzhenitsyn repeatedly affirmed three broad moral and political desiderata after returning to Russia in May 1994: the importance of patiently building democratic self-government from the bottom up, the need for repentance for the crimes and lies of the Communist period, and the need to put the "preservation of the people" (wracked by seven decades of Communist totalitarianism and a decade of rapacious oligarchic corruption and manipulation) above all ideological considerations. Solzhenitsyn did, it is true, welcome a certain "social" restoration under the Putin regime. He believed that the very existence of Russia was threatened, not by a market economy but by a criminal kleptocracy that promoted spurious "reforms" in the top-down spirit of Bolshevism. After his return to Russia, the author of *The Gulag Archipelago* continued to speak out for the "humiliated and injured." He was pained that so many in the West mistakenly saw the Yeltsin years as a model of true "democratic" and "capitalist" reform. But as he told German television in 2005, the task of building self-government in Russia still lies *in the future*. Solzhenitsyn never confused Putin's Russia with a liberal or democratic regime. And he argued that it was unhealthy for Russia to have no real opposition to speak of, except for the shamelessly unrepentant Communists.

To his last breath the greatest Russian writer of the 20th century remained a critic of the false patriots who "preferred a small-minded alliance with our Communist destroyers," as he strikingly put it in 1998's *Russia in Collapse*. In the same work he excoriated radical nationalists who elevated "one's nationality above our higher spiritual plank, above our humble stance before Heaven." Contrary to legend, he also despised those on the lunatic fringe who blamed Russia's troubles on "Jews" and "Freemasons." He believed it was "quite wrong to say that the Jews

NIGHT WIND

What the heart believes is never lost:
though sometimes
to give it up
seems the relief
for which we would be
most grateful.

And as time passes by,
one belief,
or another,
and still another,
and the pain of the loss
intensifies,
then diminishes;
the sense that
there is something more
arrives from the stillness
that centers the suffering,
as it recasts identity.

And somewhere
the seeds
from the dead flowers
have been cradled
on the wind,
as we can feel—
without knowing.

And that awareness
is followed through,
even across
the open car
that passes by—

And its music
that extends
far beyond,
in the way of aspirations
of which no one
may yet be aware.

—WILLIAM W. RUNYEON

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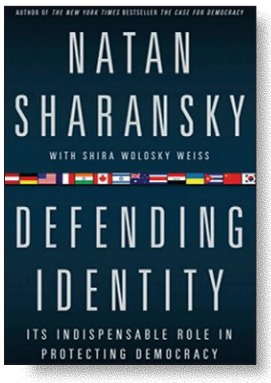
'organized' the revolutions of 1905 and 1917." In his best-selling two-volume historical work on Russia's "Jewish question," *Two Hundred Years Together* (2001–02), Solzhenitsyn pleaded for mutual understanding between ethnic Russians and Jews. Both must take responsibility for their "renegades" who broke with the faith of their fathers and promoted violent, nihilistic revolution and totalitarian tyranny.

IV.

How can we who live in a post-totalitarian age begin to honor Solzhenitsyn's legacy? A good starting point would be to move beyond reducing Solzhenitsyn to the level of an opiner on current events, the habitual approach of almost all journalistic commentaries on his work. Now that his life and work are complete we are called to confront him openly, honestly, critically, as a writer, historian, and moral and political philosopher (in the highest, non-academic sense of that term). Solzhenitsyn is a writer of considerable talent, skill, and grace, a historian who has helped recover the memory of Russia and the sources of the totalitarian temptation, as well as the great analyst—and scourge—of the ideological manipulation of the bodies and souls of human beings. Solzhenitsyn the philosopher teaches us never to confuse technological progress—however necessary and welcome—with the definitive transformation of the moral constitution of human beings. There can never be an "end to history," only the slow and patient moral growth of the human soul. More provocatively, the zek turned writer and historian has deepened our self-understanding by showing that the ultimate roots of totalitarian repression lie in "anthropocentricity," the mad illusion that human beings can take the place of God. In a thousand ways his writings show that the effort to deify man leads to nothing less than self-enslavement. Far from being yesterday's news, Solzhenitsyn remains a teacher and moral witness for today and tomorrow. His writings will continue to speak to the hearts, souls, and minds of all those who cherish human liberty and dignity, as we work to free ourselves from contemporary if milder versions of the "lie." **NR**

Staying Power



Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy, by Natan Sharansky with Shira Wolosky Weiss (PublicAffairs, 304 pp., $26.95)

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

What kept Natan Sharansky alive in the Soviet gulag, he tells us in his moving, against-the-grain new meditation on democracy, were two constants. One was his Jewishness: his notion of spiritual transcendence that he shared with other Jewish dissidents, his family, and his ancestors. Such distinctions made Sharansky a unique, rooted, and confident individual—a man with responsibilities to family and community beyond himself, a man capable of withstanding torture. But the other touchstone was his belief that there is a shared human desire for liberty: his intuition that in every man rests an innate need to express himself freely, protected by democratic institutions and constitutional government.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Sharansky became a member of the Israeli Knesset and sometimes a government minister—but he also became increasingly depressed at the course of contemporary Western society. Identity and democratic freedom, far from being complementary in serving universal human aspirations, were greatly misunderstood, and seemed to be at greater odds than ever before: "What I did not know then and could not foresee was that even after the Soviet Union collapsed, this tension would remain. I could not imagine that these two forces, identity and freedom, which were allies in the struggle to resist the world of fear that the Soviets had built, would become the bitterest of enemies in the free world."

Mr. Hanson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

In this sequel to *The Case for Democracy* (2004), Sharansky revisits his imprisonment in the Soviet Union and recounts his subsequent political career in Israel, attempting to explain why his own maverick stances so often have angered his former supporters in the liberal West, who have turned on him as much as they once did on the late Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. He argues that his opposition to Yasser Arafat's primordial Palestinian Authority is perfectly consistent with his fight against the shapeless, valueless uniformity of the Soviet Union: Democracy can be destroyed when subjected to tribalism of the Middle Eastern sort, just as it cannot survive unless human beings transcend their own place and time and believe in freedom as a universal virtue. Sharansky defines identity as "a sense of life beyond the physical and material, beyond mere personal existence. It is the sense of a common world that stretches before and beyond the self, of belonging to something greater than the self, that gives strength not only to community but to the individual as well."

For all the political punditry about what went wrong over the last decade in the Middle East, Sharansky sees this antithesis of identity and democracy as fundamental to the conflict and a key to fathoming the dimensions of the struggle. The Israelis are increasingly giving up on their distinct Western-Israeli-Jewish identity that makes them endure and sacrifice for their principles, while the Palestinians cannot evolve beyond loyalty to the tribe, and thus perennially fail to channel their ethnic, religious, and national pride into a shared commitment to democratic government:

> The so-called Oslo peace process took place between two societies moving in directly opposite directions in terms of identity. Israeli society was being pushed in the direction of cosmopolitanism. Palestinians, under Arafat's corrupt dictatorship, were going through a crash course in hatred of Jews, Israel, and Zionism and

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making the rejection of Jewish-Israeli identity the basis of their own. *The hope for peace became predicated on a rejection of Israeli identity and a rejection of Palestinian democracy.*

Postmodern Westerners, of course, won't like all this, because they believe that familial, tribal, religious, and national allegiances are always replacements for reason, and ultimately lead to the ghastly sectarian slaughter that we see on our television screens in Rwanda, the Balkans, Iraq, and Darfur. Thus the European Union, the United Nations, and the very notion of the "world citizen"—which Barack Obama recently claimed as his own beneath the Victory Column in Berlin—are all predicated on this notion that we should identify only with a fuzzy, generic brotherhood of man.

None of this is particularly new, of course. There is little recognition by Sharansky that his themes of tension between tribal identity and universal freedom have been discussed at length in the Enlightenment, and were of concern to both Plato and Aristotle. Socrates pondered being a citizen of the world rather than of Athens, and the German philosophers, from Hegel and Nietzsche to Spengler, likewise worried about postmodern Western "men without chests" who believed in nothing other than getting along and satisfying their appetites. There is no mention here either of the more contemporary debate between Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis and Samuel Huntington's worries over a "Clash of Civilizations": Central in that discussion were cases in which tribal identities were at odds with globalized notions of uniformity and democracy.

But if Sharansky's argument is at times oblivious to the work of prior thinkers, limited to his own personal experience as a dissident and politician, and often unnecessarily repeated and restated through serial personal anecdotes, it is nevertheless a needed wake-up call to the West.

To the extent that identity matters in our post-colonial, post-imperial age of collective guilt, Westerners honor only purported victims of our past sins. People of color, non-Christians, women, and gays, all are encouraged to showcase their "difference" in agitating for "equality," and for a sort of reparation, either material (through affirmative action) or psychosocial (through white guilt and shame).

Natan Sharansky is not fooled: All these hyphenations have nothing to do with the sort of identity he is advocating, but rather suggest that these supposed victims have in fact *shunned* their identity. They fail to see that they are Americans or Europeans, who operate within, and benefit from, a particular culture of long ancestry. When Western man finds no strength from kindred souls of the same religion, harbors no hope that his culture or nationality can enrich humanity, he becomes a sort of dead soul, easily manipulated and prone to accept any totalitarian idea—Fascism, Communism, consumerism—to fulfill the great human desire to find commonality with like persons.

Sharansky knows, of course, the dangers of radical Islam and white supremacy—ideologies in which a particular identity replaces humanity—and thus he explains, in detailed arguments, why democratic government is crucial in channeling the expression of natural allegiances in reasonable directions. Without democratic government and constitutionally protected freedom, we devolve into gangs and cliques and tyrannize smaller and weaker groups. And yet without identity, democracy becomes blasé and inhuman, as citizens feel no particular loyalty to their nation, or to a shared culture or religion. It was, after all, postmodern universalist Europe that let thousands die nearby in Srebrenica, did little to come to the aid of the Dutch cartoonists, believes the suicide bomber is on the same moral plane as the Israeli settler, and will, we know, never take many risks to stop the slaughter in Darfur.

Sharansky's ideal in some ways is America of the recent past, in which all sorts of immigrants, of radically different races and religions, felt pride in their distinctions, but sublimated their particularistic agendas to the common democratically enacted good. Identity galvanizes a democracy prone to abstraction, while a shared commitment to freedom in turn harnesses and directs the energy spawned by identity.

The catalyst for Sharansky's anger, as we glean from this book, is the West's double standard when it comes to the Middle East. We exact from Israelis a standard of behavior that we would never demand of the Palestinians, apparently on the assumption that as kindred Westerners they are supposed to be above identity and exhibit little pride in being Jewish or Israeli—utterly ignorant that such political correctness would, and may still, end Israel's will to confront undemocratic, racist, and intolerant enemies on its borders.

What threatens most of the world may be an absence of freedom, but what threatens the survival of the West is a sort of slavery of the material appetites, and the sloppy belief that all cultures are the same and that we should never judge others by standards that have made us uniquely free, secure, and prosperous. Sharansky believes we are now in an age in which the wages of our sins are coming due, as those who despise the West sense that we believe in little other than cheap platitudes and would never be willing to define others as less successful than ourselves, or even sacrifice to defend what they wish to destroy: "Indeed it is difficult for a society that has been waging war on its own identity in the name of peace to reverse course and now rebuild what they have been systematically trying to dismantle for generations."

In short, the way not to end up being overwhelmed by Iran is not ending up like Europe. "The right to live a unique way of life," concludes Sharansky, "is a right worth fighting for and if necessary worth dying for." **NR**

LEGACY

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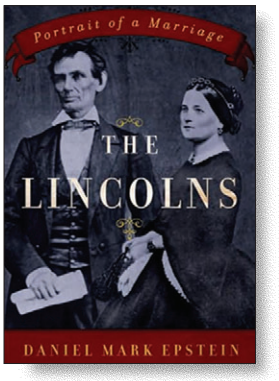
Scenes of Intimacy



The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage, by Daniel Mark Epstein (Ballantine, 576 pp., $28)

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

In this new book, Daniel Mark Epstein has composed an elegant and insightful study of a well-known couple. The author of several volumes of prose and poetry, among them an outstanding book on Lincoln and Whitman, Epstein uses his poetic gifts to evoke those tender places in the Lincoln marriage that other, less imaginative historians have failed to see. In a characteristic passage he describes how, on a summer night in the Lincoln house in Springfield, the future president

> extinguished the lamp and came upstairs. He took off his clothing and lay down beside her. He was always a great comfort. They made love under the eaves in the soft fragrant air of June, and soon she was pregnant again.

Epstein's purpose, in passages like these, is to remind us that, before they became historic figures, the Lincolns were human beings, complicated, passionate, sympathetic. The stereotypes that have hardened around them fail to do justice to the people they really were. Epstein wrote *The Lincolns*, he says, partly in order to explode the common belief that "Mary was crazy, and Abraham was a saint."

In this he has succeeded brilliantly. At the same time, he has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of Lincoln's relation to the Romantic Revolution of the 19th century, and in particular he has deepened our understanding of Lincoln's Romantic predicament through a fresh and provocative interpretation of the Syphilis Question.

The notion that Lincoln *thought* he had syphilis is not new. His law partner, William Herndon, said that the future president told him that "about the year 1835–36" he "went to Beardstown and during a devilish passion had connection with a girl and caught the disease." Epstein bolsters Herndon's claim by drawing on recent scholarship that shows that the "blue mass" pills Lincoln took (ostensibly for constipation) contained mercury and were often used to treat maladies caused by "excess of venery."

The conviction that he was in thrall to the spirochetes might well have contributed to Lincoln's well-documented despair in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Epstein points to an unsigned poem in the *Sangamo Journal* of August 1838, "The Suicide's Soliloquy," which has sometimes been attributed to Lincoln. The narrator of the poem, "damn'd on earth," longs for hell, where the "frightful screams" and "piercing pains" will help him to forget his sins.

A man who thought himself damned by a "devilish passion" for a girl would not only have been morbidly sensitive, as Lincoln was always to be, to that which is hellish in life, he might also have adopted, as his own pet theory, the Romantic idea that the syphilitic sufferer, though foredoomed to madness, receives compensatory gifts of creative power and visionary insight. Byron's Manfred, Poe's Roderick Usher, and the heroes of Hugo, Balzac, and the Brontë sisters are variations on the 19th-century theme that genius is in many cases allied to diabolic depravity. In the Romantic theory, venereal sores, like the after-effects of opium-eating or the psychological scars of incest, are stigmata of the Faustian transaction. The young Nietzsche (according to his friend Paul Deussen) visited a brothel in Cologne, where he was possibly exposed; Thomas Mann worked the episode into his novel of infernal creativity, *Doctor Faustus*. The 19th-century spirochetes, which might have been at work on the brains of Schumann and Tolstoy, almost certainly made merry in the nervous systems of Schubert, Paganini, Manet, Gauguin, and Baudelaire.

There is, to be sure, no evidence that Lincoln himself actually had syphilis. The record suggests that, if he did at one time believe he was infected, he was afterwards convinced that the "blue mass" pills had cured him. But the Faustian rule that genius and power can be redeemed only in the awful coin of suffering might well have lingered in his imagination. In February 1862, while his son Willie lay dying, Lincoln borrowed Goethe's *Faust* from the Library of Congress. He read, too, "Jean Paul" (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter), the German Romantic who, Epstein notes, beat Nietzsche to the hellish punch-line "God is dead." In December 1862, after the debacle at Fredericksburg, Lincoln said, "If there is a worse place than Hell, I am in it." *Macbeth*, with its bloody evocation of the hell that ambition makes for the man of vaulting aspiration, fascinated him, and he returned to its poetry in the last days of his life.

Lincoln was one of the few statesmen who were able to put to a constructive use the Romantic influences of their youth. In maturity he was able to superimpose on the Romantic vision the conviction that it is precisely our experiences of the hellish passages of life that enable us to atone for our errors, and to prepare the way for our regeneration. What is hellish in us can (at least in part) be harrowed, or transcended.

This is the theme of the great addresses of Lincoln's presidency, which form such a contrast to the contemporaneous proclamations of the less wisely Romantic Bismarck, who envisioned politics as an eternally hellish struggle for power and preeminence. Lincoln passed through the inferno, but—like Baudelaire, who (in the words of his biographer Enid Starkie) "came to allow himself to hope in God's mercy and grace"—he eventually emerged. Epstein, in this fine book, helps us to understand *how* he emerged, and came again to see the stars. **NR**

Mr. Beran is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. His most recent book is *Forge of Empires: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made, 1861–1871*.

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■ FILM ■

Tales of Waugh

ROSS DOUTHAT

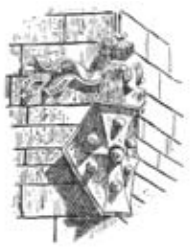
I SHOULD note at the outset that despite being a literary-minded Catholic convert, I regard Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* with something less than uncritical affection. I tend to share Waugh's own judgment, handed down in the late 1950s when he made revisions on the book, that it "is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language," and I think some of its themes are better amplified in Graham Greene's novels and Waugh's own *Sword of Honour* trilogy.

Moreover, I'm one of the few Catholic conservatives who have never seen Granada Television's famous twelve-hour *Brideshead* miniseries, which made a star out of Jeremy Irons and PBS addicts out of millions of Anglophile Americans. In a sense, then, I represent the ideal audience for the shorter, sudsier adaptation of Waugh's novel now showing: I'm less likely than most Waughophiles to gripe about deviations from the source material, and less inclined as well to compare the thing unfavorably with the better, longer Reagan-era adaptation.

Alas, the new *Brideshead Revisited* has one damning disadvantage: It was produced by a group of utter fools. Indeed, if the passel of philistines responsible for this botch of a movie didn't exist, Waugh himself would have had to invent them. One can't dismiss outright the possibility that the new *Brideshead* is some sort of posthumous prank by the master, and that its writers and director, in particular, exist only as Waughian send-ups of a certain modern movieland type, rather than as actual flesh-and-blood nincompoops. Not since Roland Joffé transformed *The Scarlet Letter* into a bodice-ripping vehicle for Demi Moore's thespian ambitions (and surgically augmented breasts) has an adaptation of a classic novel labored so strenuously to miss the point of its source material.

Imagine Christopher Hitchens being hired to pen the screenplay for *The Passion of the Christ*, and you have roughly the approach that screenwriters Andrew Davies and Jeremy Brock took to Waugh's novel, which the author famously described as an attempt to dramatize "what is theologically termed 'the operation of Grace,' that is to say, the unmerited and unilateral act of love by which God continually calls souls to Himself." Interviewed a few years ago, when the project was still germinating, Davies was having none of this nonsense: "If God can be said to exist in my version," he told the British press, "he would be the villain." His co-writer, Brock, perhaps wary of alienating a large swathe of the novel's fan base before the film had even screened, attempted to soft-pedal the issue somewhat earlier this year, explaining that God, of course, "is not the villain of our adaptation. The villain is man-made theology." (The Almighty no doubt breathed a sigh of relief at this intelligence.)

So much for Waugh's major theme. Nor did the filmmakers care much for the novel's minor theme, the decline of the British aristocracy and the rise of dreary, unheroic mass man. The director, Julian Jarrold, told the *New York Times* that he had held long, fretful conversations about Waugh's tendency to be "sometimes profoundly undemocratic," particularly in his portrayal of a certain Hooper, who's depicted as the embodiment of petit-bourgeois mediocrity. Waugh's narrator, Charles Ryder, laments the coming "Age of Hooper," in which aristocracy must pass away "so that things might be safe for the travelling salesman, with his polygonal pince-nez, his fat, wet handshake, his grinning dentures." Strong stuff, that—and rather too much for Jerrold: Hooper, he informed the *Times*, represents "the future of England, and the hope of the 1945 generation, and we've put a positive spin on him."



I don't begrudge the filmmakers their antipathy toward Catholicism, or their desire to champion the common man. The question is why they thought it made sense to shoehorn these themes into an adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*, of all possible stories. (Aren't there any socialist-realist screenplays floating around Hollywood, pining to be filmed?) I suppose they thought that it would require only a few tweaks to Waugh's plot to get their own ideas across instead of his, which is why the basic architecture of the novel has been kept intact: Ryder (Matthew Goode), a young Oxonian from an undistinguished family, still falls in with Sebastian Flyte (Ben Whishaw), the foppishly charming scion of the noble, staunchly Catholic Marchmain family; Ryder still spends long, idyllic summers at the Marchmains' manor house, Brideshead; and he still pursues Sebastian's sister Julia (Hayley Atwell) as Sebastian goes into a slow, alcohol-fueled decline.

It's just the details that have changed, the better to create a more explicit love triangle between Ryder and the Flyte siblings—Sebastian's homosexuality, subtextual in the novel, is taken for granted by Whishaw's limp-wristed caricature of a Doomed Young Gay—and the better to portray the family matriarch, Lady Marchmain (Emma Thompson), as a chilly Catholic tyrant who drives away her charmingly pagan husband (Michael Gambon), bullies her daughter into a loveless marriage, crucifies her son for being gay, and casts a wasting shadow over the entire family's happiness long after she's dead and gone. (All the while, the camera lingers portentously over rosaries and crucifixes, framing them the way you might swastikas in a film set in Thirties Berlin.)

This broad shift in emphasis ensures only that the architecture of the story makes absolutely no sense. The arc of the plot requires that Ryder be entranced and seduced by the Catholic aristocrats of Brideshead, but the film's ideological agenda makes it impossible to see why *anyone* would be entranced by a family so obviously crippled by snobbery, cruelty, and Inquisition-era papistry. (It doesn't help that Goode invests Ryder with all the passion of a damp block of wood.) And then, having eviscerated the narrative to make their point about how God can ruin your life, the filmmakers don't even have the guts to change Waugh's philo-Catholic conclusion: Their anti-Christian polemic concludes, bizarrely, with a deathbed conversion that's more or less played straight. I had spent most of the movie groaning, but at that point I had to laugh—which is the only appropriate response to the satire of clueless, artless secularism that this adaptation seems to be. **NR**

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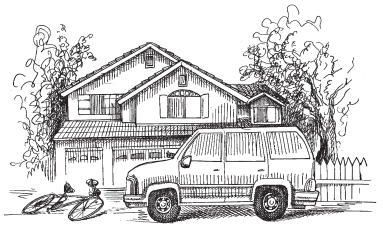
■ THE STRAGGLER ■

On the Shelf



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

Has there been some kind of revolution in library management this past year or two? I recall library fines as being puny—nickels and dimes even for books overdue by a month or more. And then it seemed—and this is impressionistic because I am, you understand, normally punctilious about returning library books on time—it seemed that the fines had suddenly multiplied tenfold. On one occasion last year, for the first time in my life, I paid a library fine with paper money, and got no change.

Well, no more. On my birthday this year I passed one of those milestones that appear as Middle Age shades off into Senior Citizenship. Tidying my study a few days after the birthday, I turned up a book that was disgracefully overdue. It was Peter Ackroyd's *Albion*, just as gripping and learned as all his others, but somehow set aside and forgotten in the drifts and piles of books that accumulate so relentlessly in my much-too-small study. I hastened down to the library with it, bracing myself for a monstrous fine. But: "Thank you!" chirped the librarian as she finished checking in the book, her voice and manner clearly indicating that our transaction was over.

"Isn't there a fine?" I asked, anxious to be a good citizen.

"No." She nodded at her computer screen. "You're a senior now. Don't have to pay fines."

The clouds parted, a shaft of sunlight breaking through. No more library fines! What else do I have coming to me? Waivers on parking tickets? Discount cinema admissions? I am now an elder of the tribe, to be honored and deferred to. (Will someone please tell my children?) It was a complete surprise, as the birthday just past was not one of the usual markers—was not in fact, I hasten to say, any very large or significant number at all. Bless my town and its wonderful library service!—which costs me a mere 7 percent of my property tax, I see from the breakdown on my statement. Given the choice, of course, I would trade in my new privilege for a couple of lost years. Matters are so arranged, though, that one never is given the choice. I'll take the privilege.

The whole episode reinforced my lifelong love affair with libraries. In every place I have lived, I have been intimate with the local libraries. I have always headed for them instinctively, and spent countless happy hours among their shelves. I would not mind very much dying in a library, though preferably from natural causes, not crushed by a falling bookshelf like the fellow in *Howards End*.

I remember my libraries more clearly than I do my actual living spaces. Of the academic ones, most were mathematical, long groaning shelves of *Comptes Rendus*, *Gesammelte Werke*, and *Nordisk Matematisk Tidskrift*. At Columbia University's math library, the wall near the entrance is decorated with four large portraits of mathematicians, two male and two female. Since only 2 percent of first-rank mathematicians have been female, this is grossly unbalanced mathematically, though of course of perfect correctness politically. When I told Charles Murray about this, he thought it noteworthy enough to put into his book *Human Accomplishment*.

Of scholarly libraries other than the mathematical, I have spent much time only in the one at London's School of Oriental and African Studies. The forbidding ranks of dynastic histories and commentaries on commentaries on the Confucian classics were beyond my abilities, but I loved to seek out 19th-century travelers' accounts, diplomats' reports, and memoirs by lone missionaries in remote districts. I still have my notes. Here is Scottish missionary/doctor Dugald Christie, from *Ten Years in Manchuria* (Edinburgh, 1895):

> Some begin to use opium to relieve pain. Others take it to cheer them in sorrow and trouble, or to distract their thoughts; for the Chinese have no such social pleasures as we have in the West. Their lives are colourless and tame.

Not enough libraries, perhaps.

Ordinary municipal libraries have their own delights. The one in my English hometown was a grand affair, with a broad marble staircase leading upstairs to the reference section, the staircase walls lined with watercolors of old churches, manor houses, and monuments of the county. Upstairs, when you got there, were all the one-inch (to a mile, that is) Ordnance Survey maps of Britain bound up, unfolded, in two tremendous volumes on a table—the biggest books I have ever handled.

Library history is a worthy study. The essentials of a library are vast masses of paper, with sufficient light for reading. Until Thomas Edison came along there were only two sources of reading light: the sun, and naked flame. Both are problematic. Too much sunlight causes paper to deteriorate, while fire is an obvious hazard. Sunlight was the lesser evil, and architects struggled for centuries to bring it to book stacks and carrels. The widespread availability of window glass (and floor glass, as in the elegant math library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) helped a lot, but even then a library was still a conflagration waiting to happen. It is surprising that libraries did not go up in flames more often than they did.

Every Eden has its serpent, of course, and libraries are plagued by their own characteristic evils. Mildly nutty people seem to gravitate to the reading rooms of public libraries, and there is always one hunched over a table having a muttered conversation with the *New York Times*. These eccentrics should be treated with care. One of the only two actual fist-fights I have ever been in was at my hometown's main library reading room with a patron who had made himself obnoxious enough that I attempted a citizen's expulsion. We were, of course, *both* expelled, against my indignant protests. Public-spiritedness is rarely given its due.

In recent years the cellphone has intruded too, and a pleasant reading-room browse of *The Economist* or National Review is liable to be interrupted by one of these fool gadgets tweeting Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. More often than not the thick-skinned owner of the thing then favors us with one side of his (much more often *her*) shopping list, courtship ritual, or domestic dispute. I may attempt another citizen's expulsion, if I can overcome the humiliating memory of the last one. **NR**

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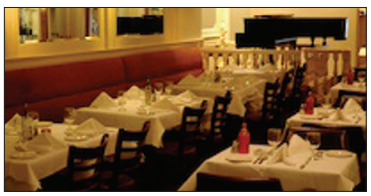

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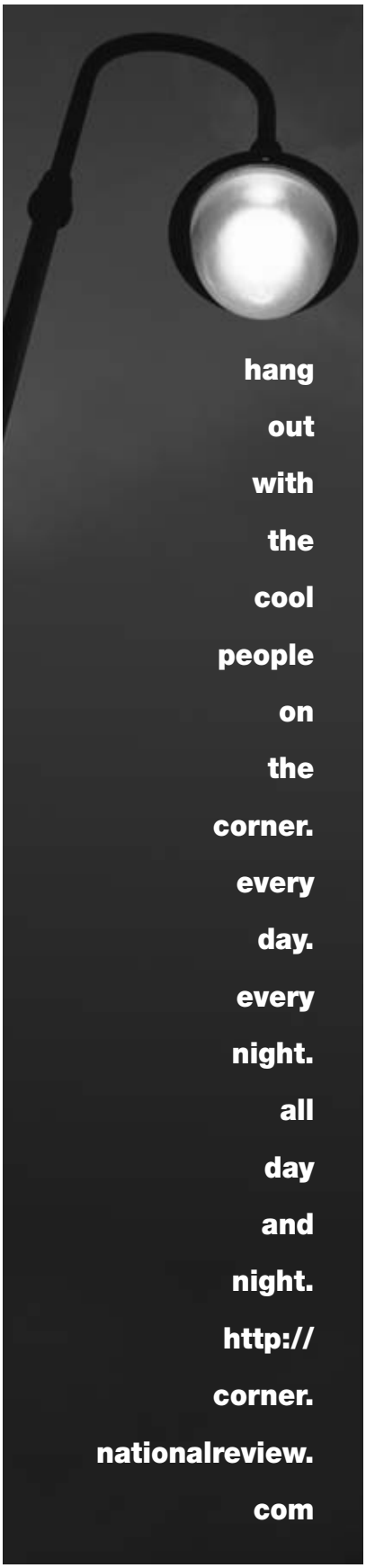

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but enough about you

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Giant

THE headline in the *Times* a few weeks ago—SOLZHENITSYN, LITERARY GIANT WHO DEFIED SOVIETS, DIES AT 89—seemed to come out of nowhere. It was almost (I say this blushingly) as if he had already died. "Giant" is in his case precisely accurate, and yet . . . wasn't the last time he got a headline in the *Times* because his TV show was canceled? That was as if a pope had been reduced to teaching Sunday school in the suburbs, and had gotten into some idiotic squabble with the parents association. How did Emerson put it? Every hero becomes a bore at last.

But it wasn't boring reading his obituary, to which the *Times* devoted two entire inside pages, the kind of acreage normally devoted to great statesmen, or indeed, popes. His life reads *like* a Russian novel, and a long one at that. It seems ironic that he became world-famous, in 1963, for a Russian novel consisting of a mere 160 pages; Tolstoy and Dostoevsky took at least that many to clear their throats.

He was born one year after the Russian Revolution, and outlived the Soviet Union by almost 20 years. He was jailed by Stalin, rehabilitated by Khrushchev, re-exiled by Brezhnev, welcomed back by Yeltsin, and a year before he died accepted a medal from former KGB officer Vladimir Putin. That's some arc. Only Churchill, who also used to lay bricks, though under rather more pleasant circumstances, lived that kind of panoramic biographical sweep.

I fell for Solzhenitsyn early, as a teenager, when my father introduced me to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. I read it, amazed and horrified. One comes away from the book the way one does from Primo Levi's account of his time at Auschwitz, numb and vaguely ashamed of oneself for having enjoyed the myriad benisons of American birthright.

I went on to his other books, but finally gave up about halfway through the 300,000 words of *The Gulag Archipelago*, when the account—or perhaps more accurate to say, accounting—of horrors reached a kind of surfeit-point. *Gulag* is, among other things, a work of meticulous reporting. Solzhenitsyn interviewed 227 other survivors of the prison system, and seems to have left nothing out. The sheer math of it is monstrous: An estimated 60 million human beings went through the gulag. Sixty million—roughly the combined populations of California and Texas.

Witness in the making

Reading about Solzhenitsyn puts one in mind of another giant figure of the Cold War era: Whittaker Chambers. As in "witness"—for that is what Solzhenitsyn preeminently was. As he noted in *The Oak and the Calf*, published a year after the KGB arrested him and sent him toward exile in Vermont, home of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream: "I must write simply to ensure that it was not forgotten, that posterity might someday come to know of it."

When he was stricken with cancer in the early 1950s while living a wretched existence in internal exile, his main thought was that his recording of Soviet-wrought human misery might be lost. So he wrote it all down on small strips of paper, which he inserted into an empty champagne bottle that he buried. The ultimate message in a bottle. He didn't die of the tumor, and became convinced that this was the result of "a divine miracle." Another giant of the Cold War, Pope John Paul II, was also convinced he'd been spared by providence when Mehmet Ali Agca's four bullets failed to kill him.

If Solzhenitsyn had not endured such ordeals—world war, the camps, cancer, exile—it might be easier to tut-tut over his being so darned inconsiderate to the 1978 graduating class of Harvard. He had the temerity to tell them: "After the suffering of decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer than those offered by today's mass living habits, introduced by the revolting invasion of publicity, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music." *Dude, chill!* Chill he did, at a penal camp in Kazakhstan—a place more recognizable to today's college gen for being the fictional home of Borat.

While he was typing *The Gulag Archipelago*, his typewriter kept giving out. He had to solder it back together and make jury-rig repairs. It was as if the machine itself were collapsing beneath the weight of all those dreadful stories. He worked fast, looking over his shoulder. "If the KGB descended," he wrote in *Oak*, "the many-throated groan, the dying whisper of millions, the unspoken testament of those who had perished, would all be in their hands, and I would never be able to reconstruct it all, my brain would never be capable of it again."

If in the end *Gulag* is too wearying for Western eyes and one looks up from its stark pages, wondering if there might be something nicely stuporous on TV tonight, pause and think on that "many-throated groan, the dying whisper of millions" and reflect not only on our blessings but on the nobility of the man who came through hellfire to tell the story. **NR**

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